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CD/PV.767
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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 12 June 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Diallo (Senegal)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 767th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on the list of speakers today the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse, and the representatives of Finland and Mexico.

Allow me first of all to welcome warmly to the Conference on Disarmament the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country. I am honoured to receive my Minister at the time when Senegal is occupying the Chair. Mr. Moustapha Niasse has occupied a variety of very high government posts over the last 25 years. He has been closely involved in the formulation and conduct of Senegal's foreign policy. So I would like to thank him very warmly for having agreed to come and set forth the views of Senegal on the questions before us, and to tell him how proud I am to see him amongst us today.

Once we have come to the end of the list of speakers, I intend to submit to the Conference for decision the request made by Côte d'Ivoire to participate in our work as an observer during 1997. With your agreement, I plan to invite the Conference to take a decision on this request without first studying it during an informal meeting. I call on His Excellency the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Moustapha Niasse, to take the floor.

Mr. NIASSE (Senegal) (translated from French): It is with particular pleasure that I find myself before you here in Geneva this morning to express the interest that my country, Senegal, has in the work being accomplished by the Conference on Disarmament. But allow me first of all, Madam President, to congratulate you on the remarkable way in which you have been guiding the proceedings during this period of the Conference, and I say this with all the more pleasure because - this is rarely said about ladies - when we found ourselves at secondary school, both in the same year in the first form, even then the qualities you displayed through your seriousness, your precision and the sense of morality which your family inculcated into you even at that early age, I could not have guessed that we would meet again here, just as we were several decades ago, side by side on the same seat in the same class, in the same school, when we were only 11 years old, to congratulate you and pay tribute once again to your achievements in your country's diplomatic service, as a woman in a senior position, known and recognized on the international scene. I did not want to go any further without paying tribute to you here, formally, because it is indeed the will of God which has allowed such a circumstance to enable us today to stress all this for the benefit of your colleagues.

I have come to bring you the message from a country, Senegal, which is known to you all for its devotion to peace through dialogue and consultation. A country which has set as a cardinal principle of its foreign policy the establishment of friendly and brotherly relations with all the States of the world without exception, beginning with those in the same subregion and the same continent, mother Africa. A country which is a party to every treaty and every convention in the area of disarmament. Lastly, a country, Senegal, which has never had the desire or the ambition to acquire weapons of mass destruction. A country whose leaders, and first and foremost His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic, have always resolutely urged the transfer of considerable resources devoted to the acquisition of ever more sophisticated and unfortunately ever more expensive weapons for purposes of development for the welfare and progress of all of mankind. That country cannot but be mindful of the mission you are pursuing, distinguished representatives of your countries on the diplomatic plane, because ultimately that mission is a mission of peace, a mission which is oriented towards the promotion of a world in which greater security will prevail, in which greater stability will prevail.

It is more than half a century - it was in 1952 - since the Disarmament Commission was created. Later it became the Committee and then the Conference on Disarmament. And this forum, which is your forum, has striven since then, with great discretion, but also, it must be acknowledged, with great effectiveness, to seek, to search for, to find, to establish the most appropriate ways and means to limit the arms race throughout the world. It is necessary to state and to welcome the fact that the outcome of those efforts has been positive in many ways. It is in that light that your forum was able to establish an effective regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by drawing up, as early as 1968, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Moreover, two years ago, in May 1995, the duration of that treaty was extended, and extended indefinitely. Senegal, as you know, was one of the first United Nations member countries to affix its signature to the treaty. Similarly, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which the Conference on Disarmament arranged to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 1996 in New York, was an additional landmark on the road towards the achievement of an objective which is dear to us all: that of the complete cessation of the nuclear arms race.

In the area of weapons of mass destruction, the Conference has been able to achieve significant progress by sponsoring the adoption by the world community of legal instruments aimed at eliminating entire categories of weapons such as biological weapons and, more recently, chemical weapons of all categories. As we know, the conclusion of these agreements required years and even decades of discreet and arduous negotiations. This is because your task remains both complex and difficult; but it is also useful and even essential for world security. Indeed, it was because it had become aware of the importance of that task, and because it is involved in everything that can promote our collective security, that Senegal had for several years been seeking to become a member of the Conference on Disarmament. Today, all of us together must welcome the fact that that request has finally been granted. Indeed, I cannot fail to avail myself of this opportunity to express to you all our profound gratitude in that regard.

Our country has joined this august assembly at a time when the cold war is already behind us, and when confrontation seems to have given way to greater cooperation and greater understanding. The result has been a significant reduction in the stockpiles of weapons of the major military

Powers. The spectre of a nuclear confrontation is therefore becoming increasingly remote. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the threat of weapons of mass destruction is more real than ever, and nobody can deny that; and the risk of proliferation has still not disappeared today. What is more, trafficking in nuclear material unfortunately makes the use of such material for terrorist purposes increasingly probable. At the same time, the proliferation of conventional weapons, maintained by the persistence of regional and local conflicts on various continents, is continuing unrelentingly at the world level. In other words, the Conference on Disarmament will have to begin work in new areas which will be just as important as those in which the ground has already been cleared with courage and persistence.

Among these new areas, I particularly wish to refer to the question of anti-personnel landmines. The ravages caused by those mines every day and everywhere in different parts of the world are well known to you. The fact that those weapons strike indiscriminately and, above all, cause physical harm to innocent civilians, including many children, is also something that you know. We believe, for our part, that the time has come to eradicate that scourge at last. Indeed, it is with the strength of that conviction that we fully approve of the Ottawa Process which is aimed at promoting the elimination of those weapons because our continent of Africa has been suffering more than any other from that proliferation. Indeed, our concern in this regard was recently manifested by the convening in South Africa from 19 to 21 May 1997 of an African regional meeting, a meeting at which a number of recommendations were drawn up. We know that this question does not appear explicitly in the agenda which you adopted for the present session; but we are also aware that many voices have already been raised in this forum to emphasize and express the wish that the Conference on Disarmament should find appropriate machinery to consider the matter appropriately, for example through the appointment of a special coordinator on landmines. What is fundamental is that this Conference should address this matter and help us to resolve it on behalf of all victims, actual or potential, of these weapons of mass destruction and terror.

As I was saying earlier, the Conference on Disarmament has already achieved encouraging progress, for which you should be commended, in the direction of an end to the nuclear arms race. But much remains to be done to achieve the objective of general and complete nuclear disarmament. Indeed, the content of the agenda which you adopted for the present session proves that amply, because four of the seven substantive items on it have to do in a general way directly or indirectly with these nuclear weapons. The process of nuclear disarmament must therefore continue. Considerable progress has been made at the bilateral level, that is clear, with the conclusion of the START I and START II treaties. Furthermore, the nuclear-weapon States have taken major unilateral steps in this area, and they should be encouraged to continue that effort. We therefore welcome the praiseworthy efforts made by these nuclear Powers, which we encourage of course to continue them unremittingly.

Nevertheless, my country, Senegal, remains deeply convinced that the Conference on Disarmament has a prominent role to play on this matter, and that is why our country remains in favour of establishing, in the Conference, an ad hoc committee on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament as it appears in the draft programme of work for the Conference presented by the G.21. That programme also includes the question of effective international arrangements to protect non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The conclusion of such arrangements is a requirement of fairness for the States which virtually unanimously decided voluntarily to renounce the acquisition of nuclear weapons by virtue of their accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Some of those countries, furthermore, did not simply limit themselves to acceding to that treaty; they have created in their own regions, in Latin America, in the Pacific and on the African continent, completely nuclear-weapon-free zones through the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba. Unilateral declarations by some nuclear Powers, by means of which they have committed themselves not to resort to the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against States which do not have such weapons, have constituted an important step in the right direction - this fact must be stated and welcomed. But we have to go further. It must be possible to draw on those various declarations in order to prepare a legally binding instrument to provide us with the assurances we need for our own collective security. I therefore encourage the Conference on Disarmament to continue the efforts already begun in this area in order to find a common approach which can lead to progress in discussions on a problem the resolution of which remains essential for maintaining the authority of the non-proliferation regime.

Before concluding I would like to say a few words about the question of transparency in armaments, which also occupies a prominent place on your agenda. For us this is an important question which should be considered in close connection with that of the international transfer of armaments. These two questions in our view are closely linked, because transparency can make it possible to identify, at the regional and subregional levels in particular, situations involving an excessive build-up of military arsenals. This should in turn make it possible, in a process of preventive diplomacy or even conflict resolution, to minimize the level of arms transfers. It is obvious that weapons as such do not create conflicts. But the ease with which the protagonists in a conflict, potential or actual, can acquire them and accumulate them seriously and extensively contributes to sustaining and prolonging conflicts which otherwise might have been prevented or resolved in time. This is not a simple issue. We all recognize that. To make progress, the reluctance of many parties to make military expenditure more transparent will have to be overcome. It will also be necessary to tackle vested interests boldly, especially those involved in private markets for weapons. But the effort is justified by what is at stake: safeguarding the security of many of our countries. I therefore encourage the Conference on Disarmament, which in the past has already taken up major challenges, to persevere in the consideration of this important issue.

For several years now - more specifically, since the fall of the Berlin Wall - the entire international political structure has been in the process of transformation. Globally, and in that spirit, our world has become a little safer, but at the same time it has become more complex. In this context, disarmament, which has long been considered a relatively distinct subject, must now be comprehended and integrated into the broader efforts being made at the international level to strengthen peace and international security. Disarmament, the organization of a new system of international relations and the promotion of economic and social progress should now be considered, in this context and within this framework, as complementary imperatives and priorities which must be satisfied in a coordinated and concerted manner. In this regard, it is a good thing that your Conference has invited new States to participate in the process of disarmament. It is certainly a way of promoting a more global and multidimensional approach. We welcome this and we encourage the new members to show perspicacity but especially imagination in order to contribute to the emergence and the establishment of this new approach which would interweave all the interdependent problems of disarmament, which are so closely related to those of peace, security and of course development.

The Conference on Disarmament can legitimately be proud of what it has already accomplished. Indeed, it has a bright future ahead of it, since what has still to be accomplished remains considerable. In that regard I can assure you that my country, Senegal, and its leader, President Diouf, will spare no effort to contribute to the accomplishment of that exciting task which still confronts you. In conclusion, Madam President, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and the members of the secretariat for the wise assistance which they have always given you in the accomplishment of your task.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for his important statement, and I would like to say how moved I was by the personal touch that he added to his compliments to the Chair. Thank you, Sir.

I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Firstly, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and wish you success in this demanding task. I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

The Conference on Disarmament has spent several months discussing its future work. We may not have spent this time as efficiently as many, including Finland, would have hoped, but there is no doubt that the exchange of views has ben necessary and useful. Finland welcomes the concrete proposals presented by groups or individual delegations. All these proposals are valuable contributions to the discussion and will take our work forward. During this difficult period of the CD's work, the President of the Conference has had a central role. I would like to thank the Presidents for their tireless efforts and initiatives to keep the discussions focused and organized. Now it is time to move to decisions concerning substantive work. In order to start negotiations on some items, and possible preparatory work on some others, a great amount of flexibility, as well as realism, is needed. It is our view that all decisions need not be taken at the same time. If we can reach consensus on one issue we should make that decision without delay and then proceed to discuss other issues.

Finland has very clearly indicated that it considers anti-personnel landmines (APLs) an urgent issue, one that should be addressed here in the CD. This is why Finland, together with the delegations of Chile and Poland, made the proposal of 27 March to appoint a special coordinator on APLs. I am pleased to see that APLs have become an important issue under discussion in this forum. The draft decision of 22 May on the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs was a result of intensive consultations which were conducted on the basis of the Australian proposal, CD/1458. I would like to thank Ambassador Campbell and the former President of the Conference, Ambassador Berdennikov, for their determined efforts to move the Conference forward on this question. I appeal to you, Madam President, as well as to the distinguished delegates, for the Conference to make the decision based on the draft of 22 May now. The special coordinator should be given the possibility to start his or her demanding task.

I would like to underline that the appointment of a special coordinator and the possible subsequent establishment of an ad hoc committee on APLs will by no means exclude other items from the work of the Conference. Finland is open to discussions on any other item on the agenda. Since there are only two weeks left of this part of the session, it is my view that intensive contacts and consultations are also necessary to reach agreement on the other items on our programme of work. Finland considers the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention another important item. This is an issue which has a negotiated mandate and it is thus ready for concrete work. The ban on the production of fissile material would be an important step forward in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In addition to substantive items, there are some organizational matters that should be seriously addressed. The G-21 proposal of 5 June contains various interesting elements. As to the proposal to establish special coordinators on CD expansion and the agenda, as well as improved and effective functioning of the Conference, we deem this to be most appropriate and timely. It is the view of my Government that the Conference on Disarmament continues to have an important role to play in the strengthening of global security and stability. It is the task of the Conference itself to review its functioning and working methods in order to respond to the expectations of the international community, now and in the future. Since last July, the CD has an enlarged membership. The expansion of the CD means that the Conference is now more representative and more global. As we know, there are still countries outside the Conference wishing to contribute to its work as full members. The Conference should start deliberating the question of further expansion without further delay.

To conclude, let me add the following. The distinguished Ambassador of Australia presented, on 22 May, a proposal (CD/1458) containing a draft decision concerning the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. Intensive consultations the same day resulted in a new compromise version that was distributed in all official languages. There was agreement that all delegations would send this version to their capitals for final instructions. As I have already mentioned, my delegation would like to proceed with this matter in this plenary today. Accordingly, I would like to request you to ask now if there is any objection to this draft decision.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Finland for his statement, and I have taken good note of the request he made to the Chair. There is a slight change in the list of speakers - I now call on the representative of Kenya, Ambassador Tolle.

Mrs. TOLLE (Kenya): Madam President, allow me at the outset, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this august body, namely, the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation wishes to assure you of our continued support. Since this is the first time this year that I am addressing the CD plenary in my national capacity, I wish to convey my delegation's warm welcome to all colleagues who have joined us since January. I also wish to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov, for the able manner in which he guided our work.

We have all had the pleasure of listening to the statement delivered by the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal H.E. Mr. Moustapha Niasse, this morning, whose presence my delegation warmly welcomes. The fact that the Minister has found time to be with us today is not an accident. His statement is indeed timely and thought-provoking, especially coming soon after the Russian Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, delivered his statement at our plenary meeting last week. The wise and encouraging statements that they have made should enable us to revitalize our work.

As the single multilateral disarmament forum, the Conference on Disarmament has a crucial role to play in ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security. Among its recent notable achievements are the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Kenya deposited her instruments of ratification to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 25 April 1997, and is also a State signatory of the CTBT since 14 November 1996.

As a peace-loving country, Kenya attaches great importance to the maintenance of peace, which is critical to our national development. Kenya, however, views with concern the current inertia in the Conference that is characterized by its inability to agree on a programme of work for the present session at this late stage. The Russian Foreign Minister, in his statement before the Conference last week, aptly stated his delegation's readiness to "agree upon realistic priorities, and to harmonize positions constructively on the whole range of issues on the agenda of the Conference". It is imperative, therefore, that all members exercise political will, flexibility and understanding in order to arrive at an agreement that is acceptable to all.

It is in this context that my delegation, in conjunction with the G.21, actively pursued and arrived at a common position on the issue, in our commitment to ensure that the Conference begins its work immediately. As regards the various issues contained in the programme of work, Kenya has consistently articulated its views both within the Conference and at the United Nations General Assembly. We appreciate the progress made in the field of nuclear disarmament with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the CTBT. Similarly, we acknowledge the recent developments made bilaterally by the United States and the Russian Federation on future reductions in nuclear forces, when the two Presidents met in Helsinki, Finland, in March this year. We note that they reaffirmed their commitment to take further concrete steps in this field. Unfortunately, however, we have observed that this move is not applicable to all nuclear-weapon States. We hope that all nuclear-weapon States will take the necessary steps to join the process. Kenya, for its part, sees no justification for the continued existence of nuclear weapons and is therefore committed to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as contained in document CD/1388 of 14 March 1996.

Kenya is a State signatory of the NPT and the African Nulcear-Weapon-Free Zone (the Pelindaba Treaty) and has therefore renounced any possibility of ever acquiring nuclear weapons. In view of the fact that the General Assembly has consistently maintained that there is an urgent need to reach an early agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, the Conference should re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances to negotiate an international convention of a legally binding character to that effect. We hope that, in the process, the issue of the fissile material cut-off can be addressed in view of the positive measures that have already been taken by some countries.

The situation on the African continent concerning landmines is well known, with Africa accounting for over a third of the 110 million devices planted globally. According to the statistics of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 18 African countries are facing the scourge of mines today. While having only limited military utility, anti-personnel landmines prevent civilians from living in their homes and using their fields, thereby causing a serious threat to the development of those countries long after the conflict has ended. Moreover, the high cost involved in mine clearance only places an extra burden on the fragile economies of the countries primarily infested. The issues of mine clearance and victim assistance pertaining to the African continent need to be addressed urgently. It is against this background that my country participated in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference held in South Africa from 19 to 21 May 1997, in which African countries agreed to develop inter-African cooperation in mine clearance and victim assistance, and to encourage member States to become parties to relevant international instruments governing anti-personnel landmines, in addition to supporting and promoting efforts to achieve a global ban. This decision has been endorsed by the recent OAU summit meeting of African heads of State and Government convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 2 to 4 June this year. Let me conclude by stating that, in principle my delegation would have no difficulties with the appointment of a special coordinator to seek the views of members of the Conference on the issue of anti-personnel landmines, as long as there is consensus in the CD. Furthermore, this should be on the understanding that the role to be played by the CD on the matter complements other initiatives that are already at an advanced stage.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Kenya for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Mexico. I give him the floor.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, for the moment, I don't recall whether I have already officially taken the floor in a formal plenary presided over by you. I know that I have spoken under your presidency in this room, and that I have already conveyed my delegation's congratulations to you and assured you of our cooperation. But in case that has not appeared in the proceedings, I would like to place on record our pleasure at seeing you presiding over our work in an exemplary manner. I now come to what I was going to say.

As the Coordinator of the Group of 21 stated at our last plenary meeting, the Group continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1. As then announced, I have the privilege of presenting a specific proposal on a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament on behalf of the following 26 delegations members of the Conference on Disarmament and belonging to the Group of 21, namely: Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Senegal, Syrian Arab Republic, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. The mandate that the 26 countries are proposing for such an ad hoc committee reads as follows:

> "The Conference decides to establish an ad hoc committee under agenda item 1 on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time.
>
> "In discharging its function, the ad hoc committee will take into account the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by 28 members of the Conference belonging to the Group of 21 (CD/1419, 7 August 1996), as well as any other existing proposals and future initiatives in this regard.
>
> "The ad hoc committee will establish working groups to negotiate, as a first step, a universal and legally binding multilateral agreement committing all States to the objective of complete elimination of nuclear weapons, an agreement on further steps required in a phased programme with time-frames leading to total elimination of nuclear weapons, and a convention on the prohibition of the production of

fissile material for nuclear weapons, and nuclear explosive devices, taking into account the report of the Special Coordinator on this item (CD/1299) and the views relating to the scope of the treaty.

"Working groups will report to the ad hoc committee on a regular basis or as necessary on the progress of their work. The ad hoc committee will report to the Conference on Disarmament on the progress of its work before the conclusion of the 1997 session."

On behalf of the co-sponsors of the proposed mandate that I have just read, I request that this proposal be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words which he reiterated to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Madam President, allow me to tell you how happy I am to see you presiding over our work. Your experience, your wisdom and the dignity with which you lead this Conference prompt respect and admiration. I would also like to thank Ambassador Berdennikov, who skilfully guided the work of this Conference for several weeks. I also wish to say how happy we were to hear the important statement delivered by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who is a great friend of our country.

I did not intend to take the floor today, but I think that the Ambassador of Finland said something extremely important towards the end of his statement. I have in mind the paragraph that concerns deliberations on the expansion of this Conference. I think that he has raised an issue to which Morocco, and myself as its representative in the Conference, attach great significance. Consequently I would like to propose that, on the basis of the proposal made by the representative of Finland, we should devote one or more plenary meetings to the expansion of the Conference. We have consensus on the fact that the expansion of the Conference is important, we have consensus on the fact that we could have a special coordinator, but we have no one in any group who has come forward to do this job, which means that things are ripe but we need a trigger. I believe I feel personally involved, as a former President of the Conference who made a number of undertakings to countries which are not currently members of the Conference. I think that we should have some plenary meetings to discuss, above and beyond the principle that we want this Conference to be enlarged to reflect the international community, what kind of Conference we would like to have, to broaden the discussion a little; that might perhaps encourage our various groups within the CD to come forward and propose candidates for the expansion and thus work more positively.

So I will summarize my proposal. I would like you to arrange with your successor to have one or more plenary meetings during which we could discuss enlargement, in what I might call the broad sense of the term, in other words not restricting ourselves to saying yes or no to a given country, but to see what sort of Conference we would like to have - whether it would be an open-ended Conference in which everyone would be accepted, or would it be a Conference that would be enlarged by 10 new members - in other words, all the questions that might be raised in this regard. This would give a little transparency vis-à-vis those who are at the back of the room and who, from time to time, do not fail to complain and come and see the delegations, particularly mine, since we played a rather modest role at the outset on this issue. So I would like you to arrange two or three meetings with your successor so that we can have a public debate which would enable us to provide a few basic ideas, first of all to these delegations that are waiting, and then among ourselves, and we might possibly have a special coordinator on whom everyone agrees.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Morocco, and so we take good note of his proposal. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil. I give the floor to Ambassador Saboia.

Mr. SABOIA (Brazil): Madam President, allow me first to address to you the congratulations of my delegation for your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the full cooperation of the Brazilian delegation. I would like also to extend my delegation's gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, for the excellent manner in which he conducted his duties as President of the Conference. I also would like to put on record the appreciaton of my delegation for the important statement given this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal.

Brazil has joined the large number of G.21 delegations in endorsing the draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament just introduced by the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico. Nuclear disarmament is a major concern of our time and a legitimate aspiration of the international community. It is incumbent upon the CD, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, to discharge its responsibilities in this regard. The call for the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the CD was recently renewed by the G.21 in document CD/1462, and has also enjoyed the support of other members of the Conference. The present draft mandate for an ad hoc committee reflects principled positions with regard to nuclear disarmament and to the responsibilities of the CD in this matter. It is consistent with General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament, as well as with the request to the CD contained therein. It also reflects the view of the vast majority of States with regard to the priority that should be conferred upon the issue of nuclear disarmament.

Bearing in mind the points made above, the Brazilian delegation wishes to stress that, in its view, the draft mandate is put forward as a proposal to be discussed, and hopes it will be conducive to such discussions. Our support for the draft mandate should not be interpreted as placing a limitation on our willingness to continue to seek formulas which would facilitate reaching the objective of beginning negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the CD.

The PRESIDENT: (translated from French): I thank the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Saboia, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Chile, Ambassador Berguño.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I wish to say how happy we were to listen to all the words of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, and especially those words of praise he addressed to you, Madam President, which were well deserved, sincere and I think reflected the thoughts of all of us. But I would like to refer to the significant fact that both that presentation and the presentation made by the distinguished delegate of Kenya reflect in a substantive manner the position of my country on the questions that our Conference should address, questions that are set forth in a programme of work agreed by the Group of 21. We have also heard the introduction of a proposed mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, and lastly we have heard an important proposal, with which I would like to associate myself very particularly, which is the proposal made by the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco, whose devotion to and concern for the cause of expansion we share, very especially the countries which very recently, like yours, Madam President, and ours, have been able to become members of the Conference on Disarmament, thanks to an action which found a response in the Conference and which we hope in the future will also find a response and open up the prospect of expansion but also open up, as Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi put it so well, comprehensive and full consideration of the issue of expansion in a transparent manner by the Conference.

My delegation has difficulty in understanding why we cannot perform any of these actions, why the question posed by the representative of Finland remains unanswered, why a coordinator for expansion cannot be appointed, why a coordinator for the functioning of the Conference cannot be appointed, why a coordinator for the agenda cannot be appointed, what is the reason for the fact that, having received not only majority support, but in some cases it is said that no delegation has difficulty with some of these issues, we remain completely deadlocked. We have rules of procedure; we have priorities; we have documents that are tabled and are not being considered.

I believe that a basic issue has been raised in Ambassador Reimaa's wise assessment - that each question must have an answer and that that order is laid down in our rules, which we must not manipulate, or extend, or prolong indefinitely. The time has come to reply to each of these questions. On anti-personnel landmines, we have heard a rather dramatic reference made in the statement of the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal and the representative of Kenya to the importance of the issue in some regions, and the importance of rapid and effective humanitarian action, but also I think that the significant reflection of these and other statements is that the issue is an issue of importance for the Conference on Disarmament and that we await a pronouncement in this regard.

Concerning the proposed mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, my delegation would like to state here that we are also waiting for there to be a reaction on this subject and for this subject to be considered. My delegation is not in a position to subscribe to this particular mandate for a clear and precise reason - because on one of the subjects which are included in this mandate there is already an adopted mandate, which is the subject of cessation of the production of fissile material for warlike purposes. But the other one does not exist, and we would like it to exist as soon as possible. We would like it to be possible to discuss this matter, we would like not to be constantly confronted with a wall of silence, we would like to have negotiations on the subject. The President of my country, in 1958, I believe, answered a question raised by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, and expressed his willingness to see the negotiation of a convention for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Time has passed and we cannot conduct these negotiations. The important thing is to take a step forward. The distinguished representative of Iran has made a proposal in this regard. This proposal, a minimal proposal, the proposal for a special coordinator for the topic, could not be accepted either. I would like to make an appeal for flexibility, for a breakthrough, for serious-mindedness in the consideration of these subjects. It is not possible to continue indefinitely playing a game of concealment. It is necessary for us to know whether we wish to work in this Conference on Disarmament for international disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Chile for that statement.

As I announced at the beginning of the present plenary meeting, I would now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the request made by Côte d'Ivoire to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference for 1997. You have this request before you with a covering note from the President (CD/WP.487). May I assume that the Conference approves this request? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): As you know, intensive consultations are continuing on the draft decision of 22 May 1997 concerning the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, as well as on the proposed programme of work suggested by the Group of 21 in document CD/1462. Without prejudice to the efforts that I wish to continue during my term of office on this subject, I intended to put to you a proposal to hold open-ended informal consultations immediately after this plenary meeting in order to continue the consideration of the proposals before us and try to secure a consensus. I intended to put this proposal to you in the light of the Presidential consultations held yesterday afternoon. But this morning, we heard an appeal from the representative of Finland, who would like the Conference to be able to take a decision on the proposal of 22 May for the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. Other voices have been raised to express the wish that the Conference should emerge at last from the inertia in which it seems to have been revelling since the beginning of our work.

It is now June, and we have not yet achieved anything. We have a host of proposals, as Ambassador Berguño has reminded us, which have remained unanswered. We have before us proposals made by various quarters, which have been put to the Conference, some of which seem to have been forgotten, while for others we cannot arrive at a consensus, even though many of us think that a solution is at hand. Therefore, I too would like to appeal to the Conference to be good enough to make up its mind to take a decision on one or other of the proposals before it, whether it be anti-personnel landmines, the programme of work, expansion of the Conference.

The Ambassador of Morocco has made a very interesting proposal. I am quite prepared to have as many plenary meetings as would suit the Conference in order to deal with this issue in all its aspects, but I think I need not remind you that when the question arose of having a special coordinator on this issue, we were not in a position to produce a candidate, and this question has remained pending up to now. So this is the appeal I wish to make to the Conference. We can continue the plenary, if the Conference so wishes, take a decision, whether it is on the 22 May document on anti-personnel mines, or on the programme of work which was circulated as early as 5 June, which all delegations said they were prepared to discuss. I am waiting for the Conference to tell me what it wants to do, and I hope that its common desire will be that we should be able to work and at last arrive at a result. The President is in the hands of the Conference.

I would like to give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. HERNANDEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, first of all I should like to congratulate you for all the efforts you are making to try to get the Conference on Disarmament out of this deadlock, and also to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for his excellent statement.

Madam, I think that you have been very clear in what you have just said: decisions are necessary. Here I would like to take a step backwards and refer to some of the points I heard in previous statements. Let us take the subject of expansion, on which I think my delegation can speak with some authority, because we have always been very active and fought for this to be able to materialize. We are in agreement - it is necessary to take a decision, perhaps it is necessary to appoint a coordinator, but what my delegation doesn't think will be easy for the members of this Conference to accept is that the only thing we would have to do would be to expand ourselves without being able to make use of the time to reach agreement on substantive issues. That is our priority. This does not mean that we cannot discuss the expansion issue, but there are other issues. We must show some responsibility in our work.

(Mr. Hernández, Argentina)

You have also referred, Madam, to the Group of 21 proposal, which my delegation is of course prepared to discuss. We see that work has been done that enabled the members of the Group to agree and we hope we are going to hold a number of meetings to discuss it which will lead to acceptance by members of other groups, or by different members of this Conference individually. I believe that in a certain respect, given the urgent need to take decisions, we are mixing everything up. I believe that today there has been a clear statement on an official request for the taking of a decision, put forward by the Ambassador of Finland. I believe that that official request, and I am certain of this, has been supported by Ambassador Berguño of Chile, and I believe that this very day, and in this formal meeting, we must take a decision on this matter. My delegation is ready to pursue the discussion of other subjects, but I wish to repeat that we would be grateful if the formal request for a decision at this formal plenary could be dealt with.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to say that my country's delegation is very gratified to see you presiding over our proceedings. I would also like to say that my country's delegation is very happy to note the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who made a statement before this Conference. That is additional proof of the importance which Senegal attaches to the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation was surprised to learn of the request of the Ambassador of Finland that a decision be taken at this meeting concerning the appointment of a special rapporteur/coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We were surprised because the information that we received from the Coordinator of the Group of 21, following Presidential consultations yesterday afternoon, indicated the following:

(continued in English)

> "The President was in a position to draw the following conclusions:
>
> "(a) There is no consensus to take a decision in the plenary on the proposal submitted on 22 May 1997, regarding APLs;
>
> "(b) There exists a proposal to have open-ended Presidential consultations on two items - the proposal dated 22 May 1997 and the proposal submitted by the G.21 (CD/1462). These two proposals are to be considered together with no order of priority;
>
> "(c) There will be open-ended informal Presidential consultations tomorrow."

(continued in Arabic)

I believe, Madam President, that your assessment of the situation is correct. My delegation came to today's meeting on the basis of the conclusions submitted to us concerning the outcome of yesterday's Presidential consultations. On this basis, we have no objection to the holding of informal consultations immediately after this meeting.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Syria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Malaysia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. AHMAD JAZRI (Malaysia): As this is the first time that I take the floor, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency. I also would like to extend my congratulations and thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov, for the able manner in which he has conducted the business of the Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the point raised by the representative of Finland on the issue of expansion of membership. I also would like to put on record my appreciation to the Ambassadors of Morocco and Chile, and the others who have added their support, for urging the Conference to address this matter. We applied for membership a considerable time ago, and at the beginning of this 1997 session we brought our head of delegation, Ambassador Hasmy Agam, from New York to address this Conference, one of his main topics being expansion of membership. It is encouraging to note that the issue is coming into focus. I would like also to take this opportunity to call upon you to use your diplomatic skills to convince this Conference to begin deliberations without delay, so that those of us who are still awaiting consideration for membership may know our position: whether we must wait another year, another five years, whether we can start making preparations for full-fledged membership and participation in this very important body. I would also like to take this opportunty to urge the Conference to consider seriously the appointment of a special coordinator, somethig which was supposedly already agreed upon, but which has failed to materialize. If it is not too much to ask, and if there is no delegation willing to take that responsibility, I would like to call upon the President herself to assume that task.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Malaysia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): We have heard a discussion which is not going to take us anywhere and which we would have done better to conduct in informal consultations. Like other delegates, I received the report on yesterday's Presidential consultations, and I understand that you, Madam, had reached the conclusion that there is no consensus for taking a decision in the plenary on the 22 May proposal on anti-personnel landmines. That was a conclusion reached yesterday afternoon. I do not know what can have changed between yesterday afternoon and this morning, but if there was no consensus yesterday afternoon, my delegation is not aware of there being any new element that would bring about consensus today for taking such a decision. If the conclusion was reached yesterday afternoon in the Presidential consultations that there should be open-ended informal consultations, both on the 22 May proposal and on the proposal presented by the Group of 21, which, by the way, also refers, in different terms, of course, to the appointment of a coordinator on the mines issue, I think we should proceed in that fashion. Nothing indicates that there has been a change.

My delegation, as you know, Madam President, is a delegation for which the mines issue is a very important issue. We promoted and are participating in the Ottawa Process; we are parties to the 1980 Convention; we are fostering the process of declaring the continent in which we are situated a continent free of anti-personnel mines. We think that these devices are by their very nature indiscriminate and we are determined to bring about their elimination from the face of the Earth. Therefore we share the concern of many delegations about the use, production and transfer of these mines and we invite the delegations which, with such apparent enthusiasm, want the Conference on Disarmament to embark immediately on an exercise of uncertain content and duration, to join the Ottawa Process, to bring about before the end of the year a total ban on the use, production and transfer of these slow-motion weapons of mass destruction. If these delegations, or some of them, are not in a position to accept such a total ban, we invite them to ratify the recently amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons, which at least imposes limitations on use and transfer, and would spare mankind a few innocent victims, and if they cannot either join the Ottawa Process or ratify the above-mentioned amended Protocol II, I invite them at least to ratify the 1980 Convention so that they will be able to participate in the review conference that is to be held shortly, very shortly, at which we will also be able to move forward in this area of conventional weapons that are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects. But above all, we invite them not to play to the gallery in this Conference in order to conceal the fact that they do not wish to do anything to find a solution and that what they are trying to do is thwart other processes that are under way.

Mr. HERNANDEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): I merely wished to say that my delegation is not at all surprised that the Ambassador of Finland requested that a decision should be taken today. It is not surprised because we have been talking about this for weeks and months. What my delegation is surprised at is that we have not had the courage or bravery, or the required agreement, to take this decision. My delegation is very struck by the fact that there are countries which are obstructing work in this Conference on Disarmament. I cannot imagine why this is happening - my country cannot understand it. I am grateful for the invitations extended to me, invitations which have of course already been accepted. For my country the issue of anti-personnel mines is a high-priority matter, and it is participating in all the negotiations in all forums around the world - in other words, we do not need any more invitations. What we do not understand, once again, is why this Conference cannot take a decision now in a formal plenary. We do not consider that consensus is also needed for the President's prerogatives to be taken up. If we follow that path, we will also need consensus in order to see whether we will or will not meet in plenary sessions. This is the path on which we are embarking. I would once again request that a formal decision should be taken at this plenary session, not for the public gallery but for ourselves, in order to shoulder our responsibilities in the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

Mr. SVOBODA (Czech Republic): My delegation fully supports the statement made by the distinguished delegate of Malaysia, and highly appreciates statements by the distinguished delegates of Finland, Morocco and Chile concerning the expansion of membership.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I really just wanted to make two comments. The first is that the record of the Presidential consultations which was quoted to us by the distinguished representative of Syria was of course the record, I assume, prepared by the G.21 representative at that meeting. I have personally always thought that we have a problem here, and that it would be much better if the record of Presidential consultations was prepared by the secretariat. When I have proposed that before, the distinguished Deputy Secretary-General did not thank me, and I understand that it would be a difficult task, but at least we would all then have the same record. Because, quite frankly, the record that has been quoted to us - and I don't doubt for a second that it was the honest record of one of the participants at that meeting - is not the same as the record which some others of us were given. So I think it is very difficult, and this is something which one ought to look at, perhaps, when we get down to considering the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. But my main point, really, is to suggest that it would be very dangerous to accept the argument that you, President, cannot put a question to the Conference without there being consensus to permit you to put the question. In the view of my delegation, that just cannot be right. We do not believe that any international body works in that way, and we think it would be a recipe for ensuring that the CD grinds to a complete halt. Of course, any delegation has the right to object to the substance of a proposal when it is put, but it does not seem right to me that any delegation can argue that the question should not be put. I really do believe that if we allow that situation to be created, we will never find a way out of our current impasse. Therefore, I would strongly support the request of the distinguished Ambassador of Finland, supported by the distinguished representative of Argentina, that you should simply ask whether there is any objection to the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on the issue of APLs in the terms that resulted from the negotiations and consultations chaired by your distinguished predecessor.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): In coming into the room this morning, I frankly had no intention of seeking the floor, and I would speak very briefly and informally on the single issue of expansion of membership. It had some prominence in the interventions of some speakers this morning, and I thank those who have drawn attention to the issue. I really do want to register, as strongly as I can, an appeal that there be some movement in this area. I genuinely feel that my delegation and, indeed, many others have shown extraordinary patience on this issue. In our case, we have been an applicant for 15 years to join the Conference on Disarmament. We have come back to the subject from time to time in this room, informally and formally. We have, frankly, not wanted to bring it up too relentlessly, too often, because we know that there are so many really important issues of substance, in addition to the expansion issue, that this Conference must address, and I can only say that I empathized totally with the kind of appeal that you made to the Conference this morning for substantive work to begin. We know there are a number of areas, whether they be cut-off or landmines or nuclear disarmament, where there is a huge importance to initiate substantive work. For that reason, as I said, we have not wanted to be raising our voice too frequently, too relentlessly, in pursuit of the expansion issue. But I do say, in all honesty, our patience is really frayed at this stage. Remember a year ago last June, we had the Group of 23 join and we were happy to see them join. We were encouraged by the statements which we took, and still believe, to have been genuine at that stage, statements of very many delegations that this was not the end of the discussion of the expansion issue, that there really was a "good faith" commitment to other applicants to keep the issue under review and to move matters forward. We were encouraged then, but it is 12 months ago.

At the beginning of this year, at our first session I believe, we heard the President say that there was consensus on the appointment of a special coordinator on the expansion issue, and the issue then became to identify the individual who would undertake this task, and all sorts of commitments were given to groups that it would not prejudice the chances of that group having a coordinator on another issue that perhaps might matter more to the group. So, I mean, it really has been something of a spectacle that there has been a kind of "pass the parcel" on this where it seems that not a single individual within the CD is willing to undertake the task of coordinator. Perhaps I have misunderstood. It is not always easy as an observer here to understand exactly what is going on in all of the discussions. But that is the message that has been conveyed to us on the waiting list: that nobody is willing to undertake the job. What kind of message does that give to us, who have been waiting so long, to our capitals, to many of us who really would like to make a contribution as members of the CD?

So, we have heard the idea that there should be a special focus on this in plenaries. There is the coordinator question out there, and any mechanism, it seems to me, is better than no mechanism at all. We have seven more applicants, I think, since we last gave any time to this. The one mechanism that I might register a slight hesitation about is the proposal that was made by our colleague from Malaysia, who I know would speak from exactly the same perspective as us and with the same sense of impatience, but with the idea that it should be the President who would undertake the task of coming up with a recommendation. If I thought that would lead to a concrete result, I would be entirely supportive of it. But I just have - and of course, it is no question of the abilities of any individual President - but I have memories, since arriving here in Geneva, for two years of addressing each President, each President trying to make a "good faith" attempt to move things forward, but it needs the more sustained, longer-term perhaps, attention of a coordinator, it seems to me. So, in brief, any mechanism that is likely to lead to early and concrete results - and I acknowledge again as I did at the outset that there are many issues of enormous substantive importance on the agenda of this Conference - we do not want in any way to distract from progress on those issues - but let us have progress in parallel on this issue of expansion, please.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Ireland for her statement. I still have nine speakers on my list: Turkey, China, Myanmar, Chile, Mexico, India, the United States of America, the Netherlands and Poland. I will therefore give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. KESKINTEPE (Turkey): Madam President, since my Ambassador had the opportunity to express his congratulations to you upon your assumption of the presidency at the last plenary, I shall confine my statement to our present discussion.

I should like to express my delegation's appreciation to the G.21 for their proposal on the CD programme of work as contained in document CD/1462. We also welcome the proposal on a mandate for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We will give serious consideration to this proposal. My delegation has noted the statements made last week by some members of the G.21 to the effect that a lot of hard work had gone into the document on the work programme and that it had been a genuine effort in search of finding common ground so that the CD could break the impasse that it has found itself in. We have carefully studied the proposal in its entirety. While all items in the proposal may not command consensus in the CD, we have ascertained elements which could be isolated and used as the basis for taking other decisions, the sum of which could constitute our work programme in the remaining part of this year.

My delegation supports the establishment of ad hoc committees on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments, as well as the establishment of an ad hoc committee on cut-off. We can also go along with decisions to appoint special coordinators on the expansion of the Conference and the CD agenda and its improved and effective functioning. However, in our view, we should first take those decisions which are ripe. We have in mind the draft decision of 22 May 1997 on the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs. It deserves our immediate attention. This is all the more so in the light of the statements of some of the previous speakers. If we can successfully take this decision now at this plenary, we could then move on to take decisions on other proposals. My delegation therefore adds its voice to the request that the distinguished Ambassador of Finland has made which was supported by other delegations.

Mr. WANG (China) (translated from Chinese): Madam President, I would like to reserve an opportunity for my Ambassador to express his congratulations to you on a formal occasion.

The Chinese delegation is glad to have attended the Presidential consultations with group coordinators yesterday afternoon. As I was personally involved in these consultations, I would like to testify that the summarization by the President after yesterday afternoon's consultations, as retold by the Syrian Representative is accurate. I could even say that it is verbatim. I could further say that, although the Syrian version of the President's summary might have been drafted by the Coordinator of the Group of 21, all these points are accurate. I can assure you that, as far as the accuracy of the President's summary is concerned, we had no time to compare notes with the Group of 21. I further want to add that during the consultations held yesterday afternoon one group clearly said on a number of occasions that it agreed to discuss the G.21 proposal on the work programme. Another group mentioned that only when the CD has reached a decision on the issue of appointing a coordinator for landmines can it consider discussing the G.21's proposal.

Secondly, the President actually raised two questions: whether or not we should take a decision on taking immediate action on the issue of appointing a coordinator for landmines, or whether, as suggested by you yesterday afternoon, Madam, we should proceed to informal consultation after the conclusion of the formal plenary. With regard to these two different questions, we have not actually reached a single answer. In other words, some countries prefer an immediate decision on the coordinator for landmines, but others prefer informal consultations. In any case, yesterday afternoon's Presidential consultations and this morning's discussion all demonstrate that at this stage with regard to the issue of appointing a coordinator for landmines there is still no consensus within the CD.

The Ambassador of Chile just reminded us that the rules of procedure of the CD should be respected. The Chinese delegation endorses his view completely. One of the most important rules of procedure of the CD is that only on the basis of consensus can a decision be made. As we are still short of a consensus, in order to speed up our work, the Chinese delegation agrees to the President's proposal that we conclude our plenary session now and go into informal consultation immediately to discuss the proposal by the G.21 on the work programme and the draft decision on the coordinator for landmines. The Chinese delegation will take part in the discussion in good faith during the informal consultations.

Mr. AYE (Myanmar): Madam President, may I first express my gratitude again to you for the excellent work that you have been undertaking on behalf of our Conference? My thanks also go to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov, who had guided us so ably during his term of office. I would also like to express deep appreciation for the important statement delivered by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Senegal this morning.

I would now like to speak as Coordinator of the Group of 21. I recall that yesterday, in the Presidential consultations, I had referred to the proposal of the G.21 contained in document CD/1462 that had been tabled in the plenary on 5 June, and also mentioned earlier by you, on the programme of work for the CD in 1997. I recall that in subsequent consultations many delegations had welcomed the tabling of this proposal as a useful undertaking to help move forward the work of the CD. I also recall that I emphasized that the Group continues to attach the highest priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament. The position of the G.21 is that there is, as yet, no consensus in the CD on ways and means to deal with issues pertaining to various items on the agenda. Accordingly, the G.21 would like to request you to continue your consultations and endeavours to find a basis for consensus. I also recall that, following extensive exchanges of views, you are finally in a position to draw conclusions, as earlier mentioned by the distinguished delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic. To again recount: the first point, that there is no consensus to take a decision in the plenary on the proposal submitted on

22 May 1997 regarding APLs; the second point, that there exists a proposal to have open-ended Presidential consultations on two points, that is, the proposal of 22 May and the proposal submitted by the G.21, that is, CD/1462, and that these two proposals were to be considered together with no order of priority; and the third point, that there would be open-ended informal Presidential consultations today. There seems to have been some confusion as to what decision the President had taken in this regard. I must apologize for my presentation to the G.21 of the conclusions of the President in a manner, perhaps, that the English was not very fluent, or that the expression in English of my understanding of the conclusions of the President was not adequate. I apologize for that, English not being my national language. But to set matters straight, we would be grateful if you yourself, if possible, would reiterate what had been decided in your Presidential conclusions. In this regard, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the delegate of the People's Republic of China, who confirmed the accuracy of the points that I presented, as Coordinator of the G.21, to my Group. There has been a proposal that perhaps the secretariat, to prevent any confusion in the future, write up the Presidential consultations and, on behalf of the Myanmar delegation, I would welcome this proposal.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I wish to say very briefly and very much by the way in relation to the statement of my distinguished friend the Ambassador of Mexico that I do not think that we countries which are insisting that the issue of anti-personnel mines should be dealt with in the Conference on Disarmament are trying to thwart the Ottawa Process. We think that all the constructive efforts that are made to put an end to this scourge should be welcomed by the international community. With regard to the important points of procedure that have arisen as a result of the statement of the representative of the United Kingdom, I would like to express appreciation for the explanation that I have heard from the representatives of Syria, China and Myanmar, and at the same time to voice my keen concern at the content of the conclusions and the fact that the content of the conclusions does not tally with the description made of the consultations and the positions of the groups.

If the three groups reached the conclusion that both the 22 May 1997 proposal and the proposal made by our Group of 21 (CD/1462) should be considered jointly and with no order of priority, if that was your conclusion, Madam President, your ruling, my delegation will certainly respect it, but will do so under protest, because this approach distorts the understanding with which we have been participating, and we have been participating actively, in the preparation and approval of the programme of work that is contained in document CD/1462. A basic element of the adoption of the programme of work is that it should not be used nor be able to be used to obstruct the work of this Conference, nor to thwart progress on proposals that have already been touched upon. When I referred to our rules of procedure, I also referred of course to those elements relating to priority which exist and which we should normally abide by. So that the consideration of two proposals, a broad proposal that is the framework in which we would like to place all subjects, including the question of anti-personnel mines, and the proposal of 22 May 1997, which predates it, should follow the rules of procedure, and the reaction that I wished to provoke was unfortunately mistaken or wrong, because if that is your conclusion, Madam, and if the three groups accepted something that my delegation obviously cannot accept because it thinks that it runs counter to our methods and standards of procedure, my delegation would like to protest. I would like to protest at the fact that in this way we are going to continue to keep the Conference on Disarmament out of work, and we think it is legitimate, and we say this again, to continue raising questions, not just on anti-personnel landmines, also on the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, also on expansion, also on all the issues, and we do not think, and we say this again, with the objection we had from one delegation that thought we were proposing this, that it is a question of dissolving the groups: the groups are very important, and we all have confidence in our coordinators, and we all trust in your discretion, Madam, your knowledge and your skill in resolving this issue, but the rules must be clear and transparent. And my delegation has great difficulty in accepting this because it runs counter to the way the programme of work was accepted in the Group of 21, on the understanding that it would not be used to obstruct any proposal, and while I understand that the representative of Myanmar should say that his language is not English, and it is not mine either, what I understand, what seems to me to stem from this, is that we are saying that in these consultations we can deal with the two issues in an undifferentiated way, with no order or priority, and that is difficult for me to accept. If this is your ruling, Madam, my delegation will of course respect it, but, as I said, it will do so under protest.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Madam President, since I have already congratulated you in my statement last week, or whenever it was, I am not going to repeat that. In any case I think you are assured of my delegation's cooperation.

I would like to make two points. The first is the issue of expansion of membership of the CD. May I suggest, if that is acceptable, that you consult, and within a week appoint a Friend of the Chair to deal with the issue of expansion? I would have to immediately disqualify myself since I will be leaving town. I think that it is time, and we have heard at least two of our colleagues - well, more, three or four colleagues - who are very rightly extremely annoyed with the way in which we are proceeding on this issue. So my proposal is, as a slight modification of the Malaysian proposal, that you take one week and appoint a Friend of the Chair, who will act as a special coordinator on the issue of expansion.

The second is, because our position on the issue of the programme of work is contained in the G-21 position, our position on the Australian proposal is also known, but I do not think it is going to serve any purpose by our going round and round. I would like to propose - because the G-21 proposal as I understand it was in fact an amendment to the Australian proposal, but I am not going into that - can I just suggest that you conduct consultations on how best we can find a basis for consensus on these two proposals through informal consultations? Now, we have gone through six months of trying open-ended consultations of various kinds. I have no problem with it. We can do them in open-ended consultations. We can do them in this room. We can do them in the next room. Or you could do them in groups - as you wish. But I think informal consultations to try and find a formula which may form the basis of a consensus would be the only way forward at the moment. I do not think that we are doing our Conference any service by carrying on in the way in which we are. We have to in fact leave to you as the President, and say that you would come back and report to the plenary next Thursday on what the results of these consultations have been. We will take it from there. But I think that to put in a week of intensive informal consultations to try and find a formula which may form the basis of a consensus I think is the only way forward.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of India for her various proposals, of which I have taken good note. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Madam President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor in formal plenary under your presidency, allow me to extend the congratulations of my delegation that the progression of the alphabet has put you in the Chair at this important juncture in our work. I should also like to offer you the assurances and support of my delegation.

We have heard many times over the past several weeks in formal and informal consultations of the description that there is no consensus on one or another issue. We have also heard pointed calls for transparency in this forum. Unfortunately, the phrase "no consensus" is not a transparent phrase, and it does not really offer us the tools that we would need to move forward. Looking at the progression of the calendar, today is already 12 June. The delegation of Finland has asked that a decision be taken today on the so-called 22 May proposal, contained in document CD/1458, as modified by all of us in informal consultations, and now available in all languages.

Regarding yesterday's Presidential consultations, or any other Presidential consultations, I would like to note that these forums are not decision-making forums. They are really devices to help the President on how to conduct the formal meetings. The plenary is the decision-making body. It seems to my delegation that no conclusions reached in informal Presidential consultations can bind us in this setting, the formal decision-making body of the Conference. So, with an appeal for transparency, and with an appeal for the desire to take decisions and to know where we stand, I would like to support the proposal that we take a decision today on the document contained in CD/1458, as revised by us in informal consultations.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America for her statement and for the words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of the Netherlands to take the floor.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): May I join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on taking upon your shoulders the indeed heavy responsibilities of the presidency of the Conference? May I also express the appreciation of my delegation on the thoughtful statement made by the Foreign

Minister of your country, His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse? Like others, finally, I would like to thank your predecessor in the Chair of this Conference, Ambassador Berdennikov, for taking the initiative which has led us to the core of our discussion this morning, namely, the decision that should be taken on the proposal made by our distinguished colleague from Finland.

For some time already, the Netherlands has been concerned about the situation in this Conference, where there does not seem to be any progress towards the assumption of concrete work. Now, on the other hand, we had more or less expected that the Conference would go into a difficult year, a year of reorientation of what it was that it could do, and what it was that it could not do, in the wake of the conclusion of the negotiations on a major issue last year, the comprehensive test ban. But in the last few weeks, and today in particular, I should say that the concern of my delegation has become more profound in nature. It is not so much the fact that we are not working in a concrete manner, but it is rather the fact that we seem - I hope it is only that we seem - to be confused on how we should get to our decision-making. Already for a few months - and I think that it is wise to recall the presidencies of your Romanian and your Russian predecessors - there seems to be a tendency to, as it were, diminish the importance of the role of the President in the CD. I remember vividly that here in this room the necessity was evoked that one should consult and reach consensus, then, subsequently, on how to consult on our so-called work programme. Today, we hear that apparently there was no consensus on whether there was a consensus - it becomes complicated. There was a consensus yesterday that you concluded there was no consensus on how to establish consensus on the proposal made by Finland. I hear some laughing, but I think the situation is very, very serious if we go on on that path, if really we first have to reach consensus on how to establish consensus, on how to make a decision. It seems to me that those who plead for that are taking the seat of the President of the Conference, and I think if that is a path to follow, then I must say that I take a rather dim view of the future of this Conference. So, like others, I have no problem in accepting that on the substance we need consensus, but it would be rather difficult for my delegation to accept the thesis that the question on how to run the Conference is also subject to consensus. Therefore, I think that on these issues it is not you who are in the hands of the Conference but rather the Conference which is in your hands, and I think that here I tend to agree with the last speaker before the United States, the Ambassador of India, that indeed there is a heavy responsibility for you, so there is indeed an enormous task for the President. It does not mean that we underestimate the difficulties, but I think we should make a couple of fundamental distinctions, all of us here, if we want really to move forward. So, I think, like others, that we should be careful to preserve the prerogatives of the President of the CD. We should be careful and be aware that the President has his or her own responsibilities, and I am sure that if these premises are kept in mind, in the end we will reach a solution.

Mr. PAĆ (Poland): Madam President, the Polish delegation has already had the opportunity to express to you its congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference.

As a representative of the third co-sponsor of the proposal of 27 March to appoint a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines (CD/1452), I should like to echo the statements made today and questions asked in that regard by the distinguished representatives of Finland, Chile, the United Kingdom and, in fact, by so many others. Why should we not take a decision in this respect now? The tripartite proposal has led to considerable discussion and in fact an important meeting of minds. As a result, a language was agreed ad referendum on 22 May. Why can we not refer to instructions which we said we had to seek and by now must have received in that matter? Why, on the basis of these instructions, can we not take an appropriate decision now, one way or another? Consensus or lack of consensus must be established here and now, around this conference table. We cannot hide behind group positions and decisions taken elsewhere.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I see that the dialogue of the deaf is continuing. I do not want to participate in it; I would simply like to revert to my initial proposal and ask you whether it would be possible - this would perhaps be one of the first decisions to be taken today - to decide that before the end of your presidency, we would devote the plenary meeting on 26 June to the expansion of the Conference so that all delegations can make statements and clarify their positions. I share the view of Ambassador Ghose that perhaps we should find a Friend of the Chair, but if you haven't found a special coordinator I doubt that you will find a Friend of the Chair. I think that if we can't find one, it's because there are certainly reasons, and real reasons, and simply discussing these questions in plenary will make it possible to clarify the various positions and perhaps see the outlines of the prospects for certain common points which might persuade many in the Conference, first to take a greater interest in this question, which is important and which we have all undertaken to pursue, and also to make it possible to appoint a special coordinator as an instrument of the CD, to work.

I think we have to make a practical proposal. I therefore propose that Thursday 26 June should be devoted to the expansion of the Conference and that everybody should prepare for that. I did not propose next week because this is an important subject, and we have to be able to consult our capitals and come prepared. This will enable those who have been waiting for 15 years to get an idea of problems and prospects. In this way the Conference will meet its commitments because this is a commitment entered into by the Conference to have a first stage in June 1996 when accepting the 23 States and consider all the other candidatures arising subsequently. I would like a decision to be taken before the end of this meeting to see whether everyone is prepared to examine a question of the greatest interest to us, because this Conference must be representative of the international community. I think that many delegations of observer countries deserve to be full members of the Conference and perhaps this would enable the Conference to better discuss some questions and perhaps to better reflect the desires of the international community. So, to sum up, my proposal is that a plenary meeting should be held on Thursday 26 June devoted to this issue and that we should prepare to make statements which would clarify our concept of expansion beyond the present number.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco. I will of course ask the Conference what should be done with this very specific proposal which you have just made, to devote the plenary on 26 June 1997 to the question of the expansion of the Conference. I give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, I wish to be associated with the greetings extended to you earlier on taking the Chair and leading our difficult discussions. Also to the outgoing President for the work he has done, and the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who paid us the honour of listening to his ideas, his thoughts, in his statement today.

For weeks now we have been hearing about the deadlock in the work of the Conference, and we wonder whether we are deadlocked or whether we have spent all this time groping blindly about in the dark. We see how many proposals of all sorts have been made, and the problem is that we have not carried out the exercise of formulating our plan of work, which is stipulated in the rules of procedure of this Conference. It is as if we tried to build a house without having drawn up plans and began to discuss how to make the roof, whether making the terrace will not cause problems, and whether we are going to start with the terrace or whether we should deal with the windows first of all.

The rules of procedure of the Conference are very clear when they state in paragraphs 27 and 28 that at the beginning of each session the Conference shall adopt its agenda for the year and that on the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its session, shall establish its programme of work, which will include the schedule of its activities for that session. We have seen that many proposals have prevented us from genuinely succeeding in carrying out that exercise, which we regard as essential to know in which direction we are heading. References are made to transparency, and we constantly use the expression, which has already become something of a cliché, but we see that many proposals can be seen as smokescreens, and we all know that smoke is not transparent, in fact it prevents you from clearly seeing the essence of things.

The Group of 21 submitted a proposal in an attempt to break out of the deadlock that has been created, but I think that the best thing would be if we could really draft the programme and if everyone said exactly, and with transparency, what he or she wants discussed in the programme and what the Conference should not discuss, and if we do not keep beating about the bush but clearly indicate the positions of each of our countries in relation to the issues that this Conference has to deal with. The Ambassador of Chile said that there are questions in the air. I am wondering what is happening with the proposal on the programme of work, what is happening with the subject of nuclear disarmament. I think the Group of 21 has offered its flexibility, it has produced a proposal designed to help us emerge from the deadlock, but ultimately we think that there is a need for the consultations that have been referred to for so long here, and we must move on to this other matter so that we can see whether we can really stop groping about blindly, and above all I think that the issue of the programme could help to guide the work that lies ahead of us, which is a much shorter period every day and which therefore obliges us to discharge our responsibility as soon as possible.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): Let me add Australia's voice to the chorus of delegations who are now supporting the proposal put forward by Finland earlier this morning that we take a decision today in this plenary on the 22 May draft decision that would have approved the appointment of a special coordinator to examine what action the CD can take forward on landmines. As the initiator of the proposal that led to the language known as the 22 May text, we believe we have had more than adequate time to obtain instructions, more than adequate time to discuss the proposal, and should now move to take a decision on the issue. If there is truly no consensus, then let us see where the problem lies. Let the process at least be transparent. I have to say I fully share the apprehensions of Sir Michael Weston and Ambassador Ramaker that if delegations here try to prevent you from formally seeking the views of the membership on the proposal if so requested, if members cannot stand up and be counted on this issue, then the ramifications for the CD are dire indeed. I urge you to put the question before the close of today's plenary.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Madam President, may I first congratulate you on your assumption of this important and responsible task of President of this Conference and at the same time assure you of our full support? We are also very happy to have listened today to the remarkable statement by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, Moustapha Niasse.

Now, returning to our concrete work here, we have heard this morning a proposal by the distinguished representative of Finland and many other delegations asking for a decision on a text which has been on our table for more than three weeks and which originally emerged from an Australian proposal, but in whose discussion we have all participated and which was distributed to us with the remark that it might have a potential for consensus. Now in the meantime we have all sought instructions from capitals, and my capital keeps asking me what is happening with this text. Now I hear that we are not able to take a decision here because an informal body has established that there would be no consensus to take a decision on the consensus. Clearly, if that were accepted, our Conference would be in a serious crisis. It is clear that the Conference on Disarmament works on the basis of consensus. But the consensus must be established here in this room in the plenary. It cannot be transferred outside. Any attempt to transfer the decision-making outside of this Conference would be a serious infringement on the responsibilities of the President. Clearly you are free, Madam, to ask and to establish whether a consensus exists on any specific issue, and clearly any delegation is free to say it can accept the consensus or whether it has objections, but we cannot relieve and transfer the responsibilities outside of this Conference, and we would therefore encourage you and urge you to ask the question whether there is consensus on the paper of 22 May.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and the words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): I apologize for taking the floor again. It is due to the need to make two points of clarification. The first: when I referred to the fact that there are some delegations that want to introduce the subject of mines in the Conference so that no progress is made on mines, I was not of course referring to all the delegations which want the subject in this forum, still less was I referring to those which have displayed a will to arrive at concrete conclusions by participating in the forums that my delegation considers appropriate for bringing about the total bans for which we hope. That is the first point of clarification, a necessary point of clarification in view of the fact that there are other delegations which, of course, and we all know this, do not want to make progress in the field of mines and for that reason want to bring it to disarmament, and other delegations which are also extremely bothered by the Ottawa Process and the very existence of the 1980 Convention.

Having said this, I think there has been some confusion here today. Obviously every member of this Conference has the right to make proposals, and nobody can be denied that right. Obviously every member has the right to have his or her proposal considered, and obviously the President has the right to ask whether there are objections to a given proposal. Nobody denies that. But our usual method of work is that decisions are submitted to the Conference when there is a negotiated consensus. When there is no consensus, there is no point submitting to the Conference something which we know the Conference will not be able to adopt. Is it as simple as that. What has happened with the mines issue? From my delegation's point of view, we have said time and again, and in plenary we have set forth our reasons, which we consider well founded, that we are not convinced that this is the appropriate forum for dealing with the mines issue. However, we are a flexible delegation, as everyone knows, and we have said that we would have no difficulty with the appointment of a special coordinator, if there is a consensus to do so, in accordance with the terms and within the context of the programme proposed by the G.21. What does this mean? This means that we would oppose a decision being adopted on the basis of the 22 May text. We have objections regarding its wording, we have objections regarding the context, and if that proposal is put to the Conference, we will say no. If, as the representative of Finland said, you want the President to ask me again, I will say again to the President: 22 May - no. My delegation does not hide behind groups, Madam.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I am sorry to take the floor again. I have already made my two proposals on the expansion of the membership of the CD and on the issue of landmines. While I have no problems with the Ambassador of Morocco's proposal to discuss the issue of expansion at a plenary meeting on 26 June, I still continue to believe that you should be authorized by the CD to appoint a Friend of the Chair on expansion if we are going to be really serious on this issue. A Friend of the Chair is a less voluntary capacity than a special coordinator. Part of the problem that we have faced is that nobody has volunteered to be a special coordinator, whereas a Friend of the Chair can be dragooned as it were into a particular job, and I think that with your persuasive powers, I am sure you will be able to pursue a "somebody-to-do-this-job" within a week.

On the issue of landmines, I sincerely believe that it is not a question of standing up and being counted. I do not think that anybody in this Conference believes that my delegation has a problem with standing up and being counted. I do not think that is the problem. But as the Ambassador of

Mexico said, normally in the formal plenary we come to a decision, not even by a hidden method of voting, but when we have already tried and found some basis for a consensus, which is why I feel that in the next week, starting from today, you could consult with groups on a formula which could be the basis for a consensus.

But the reason I take the floor is, even though the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands agreed with my confusion, that he said something where I have to disagree with him in the introductory portion, and for the record. Because this is a formal plenary I would like to put this on record, because this is a particular charge which has been brought against the Group of 21. I have no authority to speak on behalf of the Group of 21, but as a member of the Group of 21, I would like to say that at no point did the Group of 21 place any restrictions on the actions of the President of the CD, and I would like to read out - because this was a formal proposal of the Group of 21 made at the Presidential consultations, which I consider to be very useful, informal though they may be - and this is exactly what the G-21 said: "The G-21 wishes to assure the President that any Presidential statement containing assessments of the issues pertaining to the CD will not be challenged if previously consulted and a consensus is achieved.".

In any multilateral forum, the President represents the entirety of the forum of which he or she is the President, so it is normal that before the President makes such a Presidential statement, everybody is consulted. I want to make it very clear for the record, so that five years down the line anybody reading the document which contains the verbatim record of these discussions will know that there was no "gag order" on the President by the G-21.

Mr. SUN (Republic of Korea): First of all, Madam President, I would like to join other delegations in extending to you my congratulations on the assumption of the presidency and also to express my appreciation of the outstanding speech delivered by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Senegal. I also thank the former President, Ambassador Berdennikov, for his honest efforts during his presidency.

On the question of informal consultations, my delegation is of the view that the convening of informal Presidential consultations belongs to the President in accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure, which were adopted a long time ago. And during the period of my presidency earlier this year, I did convene several rounds of informal Presidential consultations in accordance with the rules of procedure.

As to the Presidential consultations which took place yesterday afternoon, I do not want to comment on the confusion surrounding their outcome, but as somebody has already said, the Presidential consultation is not a decision-making body. As one of the participants in such Presidential consultations, I am of the view that after taking the views of the participants, it is up to the President to choose the right course of action in carrying out the plenary and other meetings. So the absence or presence of a convergence of views among the participants, or whatever you may call the consensus, does not prevent any individual member of the CD from making any request to the President. So in this sense, I am of the view that the distinguished delegate of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa, has every right to make a request to the President to put a question as to whether there is any objection to the 22 May draft decision on APLs which has been discussed for a long time. For its part, the delegation of Korea fully supports the request made by Ambassador Reimaa of Finland in this regard.

Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan): Madam President, I begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference, and certainly I pledge the wholehearted cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to join my voice to those who express appreciation for the very important statement made by the Foreign Minister of Senegal.

I should like to limit my remarks to the question of anti-personnel landmines. I think we have already considered this draft decision long enough, and after a very thorough examination, we have come up with a text on which all of us have sought instructions from our Governments, and I do think that this particular draft proposal is ripe for decision. So the right question to be asked now for you is whether there is any objection to this draft decision. I do share the concern expressed by previous speakers that the absence of so-called consensus, the steps to be taken beforehand, should not prevent the decision from being taken by the Conference at the plenary. So I do appeal to you that we proceed as soon as possible to the decision-making in the plenary.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Japan I have taken good note of her appeal. I give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Madam President, allow me to extend my congratulations to you on Senegal's accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to express the great interest with which my delegation listened to the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of your country tracing for the benefit of this Conference a programme of action which is both ambitious and pragmatic and in which he also mentioned, inter alia, the possible appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines.

Madam President, you are occupying this post of great responsibility at a very difficult time for the Conference, and this very difficult time incontestably places you yourself in an extremely difficult position. I listened with interest to the advice which has been bombarding you from all sides on what you can do, or should do, or should not, or cannot do, and I began to wonder whether these contradictory questions would enable us to make progress towards the specific objective we all share - to get down finally to a little work at the Conference on Disarmament.

On this occasion, as so often, the Ambassador of Mexico showed tremendous grace and courage. Tremendous grace because he took it on himself to raise the question which you were being asked to raise and which it was difficult for you to raise, that is: are there any objections to the draft decision of 22 May 1997? He put it clearly in those terms. He replied, moving this time from grace to natural courage, because all delegations have the right to express their opinions on any position at all - he replied, for his part, by saying: yes, Mexico does object to the decision of 22 May 1997. So, after a somewhat frustrating morning, I think that now perhaps we have taken a step backward, but at the same time a step forward in terms of transparency. We know that at this stage there is at least one delegation which objects to this decision and that therefore we will have to go back to work, take up the job again, using perhaps different wording from that which has been used so far. But we will not leave this room without having finally had an answer to the question which many of us have asked and which I had asked myself: is there or is there not consensus? There is not yet a consensus.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of France for her statement. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco on a point of order.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I believe that after the statement by Ambassador de Icaza of Mexico and Ambassador Bourgois of France the question which was raised and is the object of this discussion has been answered. Could we not adjourn the meeting, as the question has been answered? I think that now, Madam, you should tell us what you plan to do in the future, because as far as the Finnish Ambassador's question is concerned, it has been answered. So we can turn the page and discuss other things.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): In order that there should be no confusion, and for the public gallery, which it seems we are all now addressing, the delegation of Mexico does not oppose a consensus on the appointment of a coordinator on the subject of mines in the terms of the G.21 proposal. I did not want the question of the representative of Finland to be put to the meeting, for the simple reason that our objections to the 22 May paper are objections of form and we would not like the proposal to disappear. How fortunate that this question was not put by the President! If it had been, we would have opposed it being adopted.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Mexico. It was my intention to give the floor to the last speaker on my list, Ambassador Ramaker, before drawing conclusions from everything that we have heard this morning. I see that the representative of the United States of America has also asked for the floor. So I would like to give the floor to those two representatives and then we will see what we are going to do between now and the end of our meeting this morning. Ambassador Ramaker, you have the floor.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): I will be very brief, just to put on record - although my statement this morning is on record, of course - just one point, namely - and this in reaction to the distinguished Ambassador of India, who in the meantime has left the room - but I was in a position to convey to her the thrust of what I was going to say while she was leaving the room -

just to say that at no moment in my statement this morning did I mention or use the word "G-21" or "Group of 21", nor a "gag order". On the contrary, I am delighted to hear from the Ambassador of India, as I had already said in my statement, that she fully sees the importance of the role of the President of the Conference on Disarmament. As I said before, the main thrust of my statement this morning was that I warned that we should respect the prerogatives of the presidency of the Conference as delegations and of course, on the other hand, that the President should make full use of those prerogatives. But of course she should be put in a position to be able to do so, and therefore I do not envy your task, Madam, but I think that is a fundamental consideration, and I am delighted to learn from the remainder of this morning's interventions that apparently that is still possible, namely, that the delegations in this room would allow the President to make full use of her prerogatives and will let her use, take up, her full responsibilities.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): I shall keep my remarks brief because it is early in the afternoon or late in the morning, depending on how one looks at it. I was a bit concerned about the discussion of CD rules and the role of consensus, and as one of the few in this room who has a long history of participation in the CD, I would like to at least express the understanding of my delegation regarding how the rules work. Nothing in the CD rules, to our understanding, obliges a consensus to exist before a decision is put. A decision, however, to be agreed, has to be taken by consensus. There is an important distinction there. So the existence of the consensus itself, or the lack thereof, is determined by the act of taking the decision. While my delegation is grateful to know the positions of other delegations and how they might take a decision when the decision is put, the voicing of national positions is not in fact a substitute for the taking of a decision. So at least it is the understanding of my delegation that the request of you to put the decision still stands.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mention is being made of your asking the question, Madam, but we have not actually heard you asking any question, and we are wondering whether some delegates are going to take this decision for you. It is my delegation's understanding that there is a practice in this Conference that we should not depart from. Issues are put to a decision when there is a negotiated consensus; the consensus cannot emerge from raising the problem, but from these negotiations, and it is clear that it has been clearly demonstrated that here this consensus does not exist. The Group of 21, minus two or three of its countries which are members of it, has set out a very clear view of what our position is, so we cannot believe that a consensus can exist to that effect. I think that Cuba's position has been stated more than once. We are not opposed to discussing the matters within a programme of work that spells out which items this Conference on Disarmament must discuss, and so we want to make this situation perfectly clear because, in addition, we have not heard you putting any question, and many delegations are referring to this as though you had already asked this question.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for his clarifications.

So, at the end of these long hours in which each of you has had an opportunity to speak, I would like to say the following. No delegation and no group has tried to hinder the work of the President. I would like to make that clear, I would like to repeat it, I would not have accepted that and I will continue not to accept it. I will fully shoulder the responsibilities which fall on the President, as my predecessors did before me, and as those who will take the Chair will certainly do in the future. There was a manner of working in the Conference whereby attempts were made to reach consensus during consultations and to present the points to be discussed in the plenary when that consensus was reached. I have tried to continue to follow that path, and for that reason, at yesterday's Presidential consultations on 11 June, when the matter was raised of requesting this morning's plenary to take a decision on document CD/1458, calling for the appointment of a special coordinator on mines, there was no consensus that the request for a decision should be made. There was no question of requesting consensus to allow the President to ask a question. Groups clearly indicated that there was no consensus for a decision to be taken today, and for that reason, after some discussion in the Presidential consultations, it was proposed that we should suspend the plenary and meet again in open-ended informal consultations to discuss the two highest priorities we have before us - the question of mines and the question of the programme of work. And no consensus was obtained yesterday either as to which of those two points should be considered first.

So, let me repeat, no group insisted on a prior consensus and demanded that the Chairman should not ask a question unless consensus were obtained. I also said, to the representatives, the coordinators, of a group who brought this matter before me, that each delegation, each member of the Conference, was entitled to put the question to the Conference and ask for the Conference to take a stand. This is the situation we have before us this morning. One delegation, namely Finland, supported by several others, asked for the question to be put to the Conference concerning document CD/1458 as revised on 22 May. I repeat, a request was made concerning document CD/1458 as revised on 22 May. I therefore ask the Conference: is there any objection to the proposal? Mexico is objecting. We already have an objection. But let me conclude my question. The question to be put to the Conference concerns whether there was any objection to the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on landmines as contained in document CD/1458 presented on 22 May. The Conference has been able to observe that there is an objection, and the way the Conference on Disarmament works is that when there is an objection there is no consensus, if there is no consensus the question must therefore continue to be the subject of consultations aimed at finding a magic formula which would, as the Ambassador of India recalled a short while ago, serve as a basis for consensus on each of these questions which we have before us. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Finland.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): I am sorry to take the floor again at this late hour. I am now totally confused. You yourself, Madam, referred to my statement and to my request and you put the question if there is any objection to the basis of the proposal, CD/1458. And then you said that there seems to be an objection to that. My reading is a different one. If I listened carefully to our Mexican Ambassador, he was attentively listening to my statement where I said, after that proposal was made on 22 May, intensive consultations on the same day resulted in a new, revised compromise version that was distributed in all languages. If I take it in a very positive way, the objection of our Mexican Ambassador was pro forma - not to the content of the revised version. If that needs further clarifications, I would propose that we do not close the plenary but we continue this official plenary later in the afternoon.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Finland. Let me correct what I said. I refered to document CD/1458, which served as a basis for the document of 22 May, so that is indeed it. I give the floor to the representative of Syria.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Thank you, Madam President, first of all, for your last clarification. I think the time has come to put an end to the games that some are playing at this Conference. It is clear that there is no consensus on the Australian proposal, as amended. All those who tried to impose the taking of a decision today are well aware that this decision will not be taken. I think the position of the Ambassador of Mexico is quite clear to the Ambassador of Finland, clear to me and clear to everybody, and also to you, Madam. For that reason, I think the proposal presented earlier by the Ambassador of India, to close the meeting and continue the informal consultations with a view to reaching a consensus, might have saved some time.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Syria. So now what we have is a clear position. There is no consensus on the request for the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We all knew it - let us be honest enough to admit that that was the case. I had hoped, during the Presidential consultations yesterday, to continue the informal consultations so as to enable us to succeed in finding a solution. That has not been done for the time being. I propose once again that the Chair should be allowed to continue the consultations so as to succeed in finding a solution which can secure the support of all sides. If you agree, I will therefore hold these consultations, in various forms, which I would ask you to leave to my discretion. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Thank you for at least putting the question that had been requested of you. I wanted to seek clarification regarding your summary. I believe I heard you say that there was no consensus in the Conference for the appointment of a special coordinator on mines. I believe what we had no consensus on was a specific proposal, CD/1458, as revised on 22 May. So I hope that we do not reach the conclusion prematurely that there is no consensus at all for a special coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States. We are indeed talking about the document of 22 May which asked the Conference to take a decision to appoint a special coordinator on mines. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Madam President, I merely wished to support your way of thinking for the future and to say that since there was a draft decision submitted for decision by the Conference that has not been adopted, it is no longer the basis of our consultations. Now new consultations on this subject will commence, but on a new basis. This text is dead.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for having clarified our method of work. So I will pursue my consultations with the various delegations concerned to see if we can take up this matter in a different way, which is highly possible in view of the number of proposals we have before us. We also have a request made by the Ambassador of Morocco to devote the plenary of 26 June to the question of expansion in all its aspects. So if the Conference has no objection, the plenary of 26 June will be devoted to that issue. I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. KESKINTEPE (Turkey): I have no intention of objecting to that, but I would like to state that we attach high importance to the discussion on the issue of expansion and we want to be present at that meeting. So we would like to propose that a plenary be held some time next week, at any time, so that the head of our delegation can be present at that meeting.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Like others, I have long experience and a long history behind me in this Conference, and I am not sure that I understand what you just asked us to decide on, Madam President. I have no problem with the proposal by Morocco to discuss in plenary meetings the question of the expansion of membership. As he rightly observed, that is an urgent matter and many are still waiting in the wings, but the question that arises in my mind when I listen to you is whether you mean to say that the next plenary next Thursday would be exclusively devoted to this question, because I do not know the speakers' list, or whether there already is one, but delegations are of course free to make statements in the plenary. We had in the past the practice that at the beginning of the year, we decided on something called the work programme, which was an idea that during certain periods of the year the plenary sessions would be focused on but not exclusively devoted to certain subjects. Of course, we have dropped that habit and we now seem to make another use of the notion of the work programme, but that was the original idea and it still stands in practice, so it seems to me that while we could of course set aside time in the plenary in the way that the Ambassador of Morocco suggested, that should not be interpreted as being exclusively devoted to the subject because, as I said, there may be delegations - for the time being, not my delegation, by the way - who may want, as usual, to make normal statements in plenary. So I would like to hear a clarification on your part of what exactly you had in mind when you made the proposal.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Ramaker, and I pay tribute to his experience. I am putting the question to the Conference in order to ascertain what follow-up it intends to give to the proposal made by the Ambassador of Morocco, very specifically, to have the plenary on 26 June, that is to say in a fortnight, which could be devoted to the question of expansion. But, as we are all aware, every delegation has the right to raise the questions it wishes to raise during the course of our meetings, and I do not think that I used the term "exclusively" devoted to the expansion issue. I would like to remind you that the interpreters are giving us five minutes, no more. They have already all been extremely patient. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I had no intention of taking the floor again. I asked for it to be in two weeks' time, firstly, so that people could make preparations, and know that normally this meeting is devoted to expansion. Of course, if there are ministers passing through Geneva who are going to make a statement, there is no problem. If a delegation, knowing that we wish to talk about expansion, wishes to talk about something else, that is also a message to us to say that perhaps it is not terribly interested at this time - well, everyone will interpret it as he or she wishes. But the essence of what I propose is simply that it should be said that the theme of this plenary will be expansion, though everyone will do what he or she wishes. In any event everyone can speak on behalf of his or her country in the light of the instructions our countries have given us. If we are not gven instructions to talk about that but given instructions to talk about other matters, there is no doubt that no one can prevent us from doing so. I think my proposal was quite clear, and everybody understands very well what I mean. We want to know what the members of the Conference think about expansion, in which direction they wish to take it and, if this is done in plenary; there is a text which we can revert to and subsequently discuss once we have found a special coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for clarifying his request. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I would just draw attention to rule 30 of the rules of procedure. I do not think it is a question of having to have a minister here before we can speak to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference. So I do not think we can be gagged on this any more than on anything else. So I would propose, in short, that you discuss this in informal consultations before you make a decision on this.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. So we have this proposal submitted this morning by the Ambassador of Morocco to devote a plenary meeting to the question of expansion of the Conference. I see that certain delegations would like this question to be fine-tuned further during consultations. We can therefore undertake consultations on this question and when it is ready we will devote our work in plenary to it. I give the floor to the representative of Syria.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): There is a proposal by Morocco. You asked a specific question, Madam: is there any objection? I did not hear anyone object to the Moroccan proposal. Hence there is no reason for delay.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I would object then to that proposal on the grounds that it is contrary to rule 30 of the rules of procedure.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom. So I intend to raise this matter in our consultations in the same way as I intend to pursue the consultations on the question of the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel land mines. As for the expansion of the Conference, I am also going to follow the suggestion which has been made, which is not in contradiction with what has also been proposed, and try to see whether there is a friend of the Chair who would be willing to make a sacrifice to try to prepare the ground on this issue. I would like to thank you all for your patience, your contributions to our work.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday 19 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.768
19 June 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 19 June 1997, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mrs. Diallo	(Senegal)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 768th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me first of all to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to Her Excellency Mrs. Zdenka Kramplová, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, who will be our first speaker today. Mrs. Kramplová has occupied senior positions in her Government. Inter alia, she has served as Secretary-General of the Government of the Slovak Republic and Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and she has very recently been appointed her country's Minister for Foreign Affairs. That the Minister for Foreign Affairs felt it useful to come to address the Conference so soon after taking up her important functions, and a few days before the presidency of the Conference falls to the Ambassador of Slovakia, is certainly a sign of the deep interest which her country has in our Conference and in the multilateral approach to disarmament. I am sure that we shall all be following her statement with the greatest of interest.

Apart from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, on the list of speakers for today I have the representatives of Italy and Mexico. Once we have reached the end of the list of speakers, it is my intention to suspend this plenary meeting for one hour in order to enable the various groups to meet, and I wish to tell you the rooms in which the groups will be meeting. The Western Group will meet in room 1, the Group of 21 here in this room and the Eastern European Group in room C.108. I would now like to invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Her Excellency Mrs. Kramplová, to take the floor.

Mrs. KRAMPLOVÁ (Slovakia): It is a great honour for me to address this important forum today. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) has many times in history demonstrated its utility and significance in the field of disarmament. The importance the Slovak Republic attaches to the Conference on Disarmament is underlined by my first official visit abroad in the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is a symbol of the emphasis that my country places on the issues of international security, stability, peace, arms control and disarmament. The history of the last 50 years has unequivocally proved that the United Nations Organization has been an irreplaceable institution contributing to the solution of these questions. The Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors that belong to the large United Nations family has gained a great reputation by its expertise, perseverance and mainly by its achievements.

Let me recall that today one year has elapsed since the Conference on Disarmament took the decision to expand its membership by 23 countries, including the Slovak Republic. Therefore, my address today is an historic one as it is for the first time that a high-level political representative of the Slovak Republic is delivering its views as a full member. We have accepted the resolution in the matter of our status within the CD not only with satisfaction but also with awareness of the related responsibility. We are convinced that the expansion of the membership has been beneficial to the Conference on Disarmament itself. It has meant an increase in its representativeness, legitimacy and consequently its credibility in the new geopolitical environment. Based on this principle, Slovakia believes that the Conference should be open to all countries wishing to join it.

It is an indisputable fact that the Conference on Disarmament has been strongly interconnected with the development of the international situation. The end of the cold war has brought relief in tension and subsequent considerable improvement of the international climate. The Conference on Disarmament has found itself in a totally new situation that neither the Conference itself nor its predecessors had been able to enjoy. It has managed to make use of the available opportunity. The Conference successfully elaborated and completed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) that entered into force only a few weeks ago. The Slovak Republic was also a party to the elaboration of this first international norm that will enable the elimination of one whole category of weapons of mass destruction. The signature of the CWC in January 1993 was one of the very first acts of the Slovak Republic in the international community. My country is highly committed to the successful operation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Slovakia has underlined this commitment by providing facilities for the training of OPCW inspectors and is prepared to continue being active in this field. It is in our interest that the OPCW be as effective an organization as possible. Therefore, we deem it inevitable that the number of its members be expeditiously increased to the greatest possible extent.

In the last years the Conference on Disarmament has reached another important achievement in the field of nuclear weapons. The completion and adoption of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) meant the fulfilment of a more than 40-year-old dream. Its importance was confirmed by the unequivocal support it received at the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly. We perceive the adoption of the CTBT by the United Nations General Assembly as a significant success of the Conference on Disarmament and the entire international community. It is a logical and important step to develop the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) towards the common final goal - nuclear disarmament. We are convinced that accession to the nuclear test ban is in the interest of all States that support the process of nuclear disarmament.

The Slovak Republic does not only observe with satisfaction the process of the forming of the CTBT verification mechanism and the relevant organization in Vienna, but it fully participates in these activities through the chairmanship of the second Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO.

I cannot fail to mention the unlimited extension of the NPT and the encouraging results of the recent first PrepCom session of the NPT Review Conference scheduled for the year 2000.

We also welcome the encouraging statements by the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation given at their recent meeting in Helsinki. The confirmation of their intention to strengthen stability, arms control and disarmament and the intended further reduction of strategic arms has been welcomed with satisfaction by the whole international community.

While referring to the above-mentioned achievements and progress, it would be an omission not to touch upon the effort to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. The discussions of the Ad Hoc Group on the concrete text of a legally binding verification mechanism that are to take place next month here in Geneva can undoubtedly be considered as the end of one stage and the beginning of a new, qualitatively higher stage.

The above-mentioned achievements prove that a favourable international political environment continues to exist. On the one hand this fact is satisfying, on the other hand, it obliges us to undertake further work and achieve further success. However, nowadays the Conference on Disarmament does not seem to be making full use of the opportunities offered to it, and continues to hesitate. It is understandable that after finishing the important stage of work on the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, some time is needed for analysis, reflection and the defining of new tasks. Nevertheless, it is highly important to maintain the existing momentum and to continue its dynamic development. The Conference on Disarmament has a great role to play in this process. Its inability to adapt to new tasks and to find effective solutions could undermine its position in the international mechanism in the area of arms control and disarmament.

We regard it as highly important that the Conference on Disarmament should keep on playing an irreplaceable role in solving the most fundamental issues. In the global context we have in mind threats resulting from uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, in the nuclear field, the next logical assignment of the Conference on Disarmament should be work on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons and other explosive devices. The adoption of such a prohibition would first of all change the de facto moratoria adopted by several nuclear Powers to a legally binding obligation. Moreover, it would preclude the illegal proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials. Such a prohibition cannot fail to satisfy the interests of all countries which are active in this aspect of the disarmament process. The door leading to the start of work has been opened thanks to the CD decision in 1995. The opening of concrete negotiations has thus become only a technical question. The Slovak Republic is prepared to commence substantive work immediately.

Nuclear disarmament is only one of the disarmament issues that mankind faces in this era. The statistical data on the number of victims of conventional weapons only confirm this claim. The Conference is the only multilateral body able to effectively negotiate disarmament treaties. Therefore, it must adopt a very balanced approach to the complex set of disarmament and arms control problems. Its agenda cannot overlook the conventional aspect. This category of weapons includes anti-personnel landmines, on which international society has focused its attention in the second half of this decade. This problem is a very serious and intricate one. It brings together humanitarian and disarmament elements. It was the fear engendered by the growing humanitarian crises caused by uncontrolled proliferation of anti-personnel mines that led the States parties to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) to strengthen its Protocol II, which sets the rules in this field. This process must be accompanied by a

(Mrs. Kramplová, Slovakia)

coordinated effort aimed at achieving its universality. The Slovak Republic has been actively involved in these negotiations and at present it is preparing to ratify the Protocol.

However, the strengthening of Protocol II can neither fully meet the expectations of the international community nor can it halt or slow down the escalation of the humanitarian crisis. What are possible solutions then? One way is to adopt relevant decisions and appropriate measures at the national level. Slovakia ranks among those States that pursue the ultimate elimination of anti-personnel mines. In 1994 my country adopted an indefinite moratorium on the import, export and transfer of all types of this category of weapons. Let me add that Slovakia does not develop and produce anti-personnel landmines.

Further answers to my question depend on the approach taken to the complex issue of mines. A number of countries perceive the problem of anti-personnel mines mainly as a serious humanitarian issue. This understanding of the problem gave rise to the international initiative widely known as the Ottawa Process. The Slovak Republic has been actively involved in this process from its inception and is intent on maintaining an active part in it. The existing humanitarian crisis can only be solved by radical action that will ban the production, stockpiling, operational use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We support this objective set by the Ottawa Process. The purpose of creating such an international norm will also be to serve as a moral and political example and incentive for those countries which do not feel prepared to accede to a comprehensive ban at this stage.

The other aspect of this issue is the disarmament aspect. In the solution of these questions, the Conference on Disarmament has fully proved itself by its representativeness and credibility. The advantage of the Conference on Disarmament is embodied in the fact that its results have a global character and are widely supported. This balances the relative slowness and procedural complexity of CD work. We therefore regard the suggestion to open negotiations leading to an eventual ban on anti-personnel mines through talks on the prohibition of transfers as very rational.

The Slovak Republic is prepared to support all forums and ways that can contribute to effective resolution of the anti-personnel mines issue. It is the principle of complementarity that leads us to endorse progress in both the main forums - the Ottawa Process and the Conference on Disarmament.

Since the beginning of this year the Conference on Disarmament has experienced some problems related to its concrete work programme. Let me express our hope that these difficulties will soon be overcome. The Conference on Disarmament cannot waste the opportunities available. The Slovak Republic is ready to contribute to its success. I hope that success for the Conference on Disarmament will result from our common effort and work. We will seek your support especially during the period when Slovakia will assume the responsible and honourable function of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in a few days.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Her Excellency Mrs. Kramplová, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, for her important statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Balboni Acqua.

Mr. BALBONI ACQUA (Italy): Since this is the first time I am formally addressing this assembly, which, as is so often recalled, is the only multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament affairs, I wish to share with you some thoughts and evaluations on the present state of our activities. First of all, let me express my congratulations for the interesting intervention of the Slovak Foreign Minister, Madam Kramplová, representing a country with which Italy entertains the most cordial relations. May I also address to you Madam President my great appreciation for the style with which you have presided over our deliberations and the efforts you have exerted in accomplishing this difficult task? I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those colleagues who, in recent weeks, have addressed to me such warm words of welcome, and which I now, in turn, wish to address to the German Ambassador, Günther Seibert, who assumed his new functions in this post just a few weeks after me.

For Italy, the issue of disarmament has always been one of absolute priority, especially in the aftermath of such historic events as the end of the cold war, and on the eve of a new millennium, a new era where the problems of stability and security are destined to assume an ever greater predominant significance. The achievements in this forum in recent years are very well known to us all, and of particular importance are the conclusions of fundamental negotiations for greater global security, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is therefore understandable that for someone like myself, a newcomer to the activities of this Conference, the present stalemate in our work, notwithstanding the successes already achieved and the projected activities generally recognized as urgent, could give rise to some deep perplexities. The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lamberto Dini, when taking part in the inaugural debate of the present session, did not fail to address a fervent appeal to all member countries to overcome ideological confrontations and other prejudiced attitudes which seem to be the basic obstacles to fruitful development of our activity. In fact, it should be evident that in our forum, political realism and a diplomatic approach constitute the fundamental essence of any aim and, consequently it would be advisable, albeit without denying the full respect of each national position, that adequate room be left for a free comparison of different theses in order to find a minimum common denominator on which the best solution for the successful attainment of our endeavours can be arrived at.

Linkages and cross-vetoes are not conducive to positive results. Dialogue is the essential instrument of our work. This assertion is eloquently supported by the Wolof saying, quoted in the literary works of that great statesman and well-known writer much appreciated in my country, Léopold Sédar Senghor, that "quand on commence par le dialogue, l'on aboutit à une solution".

On 5 June, we listened to the important intervention by the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Evgeny Primakov, and we were able to take note of his satisfaction at the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and the Atlantic Alliance. This historic document has, very rightly, been recorded as a "Founding Act". In fact, both the Atlantic Alliance and the Russian Federation for a long time have been reducing their respective arsenals, which were overburdened by the accumulation of armaments in the "arms race" of the last decades, and they are now following the reverse path on which nuclear strategy was built. We have gone from coexistence to cooperation and partial integration, adhering to those far-sighted perspectives so well expressed by Abraham Lincoln at the end of the American Civil War: "Grudge for nobody, generosity for everybody". Peace in our world is now, more and more, entrusted to complex structures, one of which is the solid understanding just attained and codified between the Atlantic Alliance and the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, taking advantage of the said achievements, we must not overlook the sources of persistent tension in other geographical areas.

Italy takes its place, without any hesitation whatsoever, among the countries who support the process of nuclear disarmament with is final goal of achieving the complete elimination of all such armaments. We already undertook steps in that direction in the past, assuming our full responsibility, and we understand the impatient expectations of some countries in this forum for concrete progress on that path. Nevertheless, we are convinced that no positive results can be attained just through declaratory good intentions and take-it-or-leave-it attitudes. This is why - and I am referring to the words of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lamberto Dini - we urge everyone to be specific and to embark on negotiations for which we feel, along with others, that the time is now ripe. I am referring to a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices ("cut-off") and to the resumption of negotiations in this field. It is inconceivable to permit fissile materials to be manufactured while nuclear tests are being banned and existing fissile material is being destroyed. It would be an historical contradiction! But "cut-off" is only the first of a series of measures set out in the "Principles and objectives" document agreed on at the Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the view of the Italian Government this document is itself a plan of action for nuclear disarmament over the next few years. Some of the most promising goals that still lie ahead are the following: consolidating and extending the denuclearized zones, especially in areas of tension; strengthening negative and positive security assurances to benefit States that fully comply with the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty; extending and enhancing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in order to detect and prevent more effectively any possible undeclared nuclear activity.

Another indisputable objective of the action of the Conference concerns conventional disarmament. In this regard, the initiative for the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines has acquired, in these last months, due also to the impetus of the Ottawa exercise, an eloquent meaning. Italy, which intends to give the Ottawa exercise its full support, taking due account of its political solutions to be negotiated in this forum, which should not exclude a gradual and global implementation of certain principles already accepted in selected and advanced groups of countries. That is what we mean by complementarity between the two processes in question.

The undeniable implications of a strategic and military character, and the connected exigencies for security, amply justify the urgency for the direct involvement of the Conference in the debate on the ban on anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, I am pleased to inform this assembly that, on the occasion of the meeting of the Italian Council of Ministers on 13 June, my Government decided to renounce the operational use of anti-personnel landmines. This measure reinforces the one previously taken concerning the prohibition of production and export of these devices and the procedures for their destruction. I have asked the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament to kindly issue this decision as an official document of the Conference for distribution to member States. With this further unilateral step towards the banning of these devices, Italy intends to reaffirm its commitment to the achievement of a legally binding international agreement banning anti-personnel landmines. Italy will therefore be present at the Brussels Conference of 24-27 June as a fully-fledged participant.

On this occasion, I would also like to say a few words on the subject of the rules of procedure of this Conference. I have noted some perplexities on the effectiveness of these rules, which at times seem to create obstacles instead of facilitating our work. The rules of 7 September 1994 mention, in annex I, the presence of 38 member States, whereas today the member States are nearly double that number, and we are all aware that more than 20 other countries are awaiting their admission, for which Italy has often reiterated its support. I am persuaded that the uneasiness which we perceive in the progress of our activity should be seen as the consequence of an increasing desire for a better quality and a greater usefulness of our debate. In other words, a more profitable and efficient progress of our work. We would therefore be inclined to reconsider this subject, together with all other interested delegations. The interna corporis are essential components of the concept of democracy and sovereignty in any assembly. They give the measure of its independence in the management of its activity and they are valuable only if they concur with the expression, internally and externally, of its decision-making effectiveness.

Italy, as one of its founding members, looks on the activities of this Conference with great hope and confidence. Nevertheless, my Government will not accept indefinitely the perpetuation of unproductive stalemates. We need to reinstate the negotiating process which should realistically take account of the limits of our action. This is the approach which has enabled us to reach important results in even more difficult political situations.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Italy, Ambassador Balboni Acqua, for his statement and the kinds words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador de Icaza.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): At the last plenary meeting of this Conference, on 12 June, a group of delegations tried to impose a decision whereby the Conference on Disarmament would deal with the subject of anti-personnel landmines and would even hold consultations on a negotiating mandate in the Conference, despite the fact that in the informal consultations it had become clear that there was no consensus for such a proposal. The delegation of Mexico opposed this attempt. This opposition was misrepresented in some cases and misconstrued in others. I am taking the floor today in the hope of fully clarifying our position.

The untruth that Mexico does not wish to have a ban on mines has been spread in bad faith. In September 1995, at the commencement of the Conference held in Vienna to review the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Conventional Weapons, I said (you will forgive me for quoting myself) that Mexico's basic position has been that the final solution is to secure a complete ban on the use, development, production, storage and transfer of mines. Any prohibition or restriction of lesser scope would not provide any solution to the problem of those weapons, which are fundamentally indiscriminate and should be banned once and for all.

In October 1996, Mexico participated in the International Strategy Conference held in the city of Ottawa, and signed the declaration entitled "Towards a global ban on anti-personnel mines". Mexico is participating in and promoting the Ottawa Process to conclude before the end of this year a binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. Next week Mexico will be participating in the Brussels conference, an important phase in this process which will give countries an opportunity to commit themselves to a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. Mexico will be amongst those that enter into this commitment. In addition, on 17 February this year, the Government of Mexico issued a declaration of principles on the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines. I will quote the principal paragraphs of that declaration.

> "The Government of Mexico considers that the use of this type of weapon constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and that the only real solution to the problems that it poses is the total abolition of anti-personnel landmines and the destruction of existing stockpiles.
>
> "The Government of Mexico does not produce or import anti-personnel landmines and maintains strict and constant surveillance of Mexican firms or companies which use explosive material and does not grant any permits for the production of anti-personnel landmines.
>
> "Mexico is among the countries which endorsed the need to make progress as fast as possible towards the prohibition of such weapons in all its aspects, and accordingly it calls upon Governments to accede to and/or ratify, as the case may be, the 1980 United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its Protocols".

The thrust of this declaration was made known to the Conference in the statement I delivered on 6 March this year.

Lastly, just a fortnight ago in the plenary of 5 June, the Group of 21, to which Mexico has the honour to belong, proposed a programme of work, the second paragraph of which suggested the appointment of a special coordinator to collect the views of the members of the Conference on agenda item 6, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", with special reference to the subject of anti-personnel landmines. We could hardly have submitted this proposal if, on our part, there had been total rejection of the idea of consultations on the subject. So I think there is no doubt about our position. We suspect that it is distorted by those who do not share it, those who oppose a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. In my statement of 6 March I made it perfectly clear that Mexico is not convinced that the Conference on Disarmament is the appropriate forum for concluding as soon as possible negotiations on an agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, in response to the United Nations General Assembly's appeal to all States in resolution 51/45 S, which Mexico of course co-sponsored, and which did not ask this Conference to undertake such negotiations.

The reasons for our doubts are few in number but conclusive. First of all, restrictions or prohibitions on conventional weapons which are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects belong to the field of international humanitarian law in general and to the sphere of the 1980 Convention in particular. Open-ended processes are characteristic of the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law. The Ottawa Process is one of these processes, and the most appropriate for attaining the objective we have set ourselves. Secondly, the Conference on Disarmament has other priorities, and other objectives. The priorities in the field of disarmament are weapons of mass destruction, beginning with nuclear weapons, and the reduction of conventional forces and weapons so that their excessive accumulation will not endanger security and international peace. Thirdly, even allowing, though not conceding, that issues of international humanitarian law should be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, our methods of work do not guarantee that we will attain the aim of totally abolishing anti-personnel landmines with the speed required by international public opinion because more than 25,000 innocent people are falling victim to these indiscriminate weapons each year.

Certainly we would not oppose consultations being held with a view to seeing whether there is consensus about a mandate to ban anti-personnel landmines through a legally binding agreement. This would not imply that the Conference has decided to hold negotiations on anti-personnel landmines, still less that it has decided to establish an institutional arrangement to commence negotiations on any aspect of the mines problem. It would merely mean that consultations would be held on the possibility of reaching agreement on a mandate that, for Mexico, could only relate to a total and immediate ban on mines. Nor would these consultations mean that the Conference has agreed that subjects belonging to the humanitarian sphere fall in its purview, still less that only those subjects should be worked on in this sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

Let us remember that, while in the field of disarmament we start from the supposition that peace must be preserved, in the humanitarian sphere we work with the reality that armed conflicts do exist. Let us also remember that negotiations in the field of disarmament call for the requirements of the security of States to be balanced against the need to preserve international security, whereas negotiations in the humanitarian sphere require the military need to neutralize the enemy to be balanced with the need to protect non-combatants. Finally, let us remember that in the area of disarmament our aim is to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and reduce conventional forces and weapons, and that in the humanitarian sphere we are pursuing the goal of ensuring that human rights prevail, even in the context of armed conflict.

We are certainly concerned about a school of opinion according to which the end of the cold war has reduced the urgency of and need for efforts to bring about disarmament and in particular to ban nuclear weapons, and that the international community should change its priorities on the subject. We do not share that view. It is not shared by the International Court of Justice, which on 8 July last affirmed the existence of an obligation to negotiate and bring to a conclusion negotiations on nuclear disarmament, and that this is an obligation for all States. If we succeed in reaching agreement to hold consultations on a negotiating mandate in the Conference on Disarmament for the total and immediate prohibition of mines, we must simultaneously intensify our efforts to establish a programme of work and negotiating mechanisms on the subjects that really do belong on the agenda of the Conference. Last week the delegation of Mexico, on behalf of 26 delegations, submitted a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We would like this proposal to be considered seriously by the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico, Ambassador de Icaza, for his statement. I have no more speakers on today's list. Are there any other delegations which would like to take the floor at this stage? None do. As I indicated at the beginning of this meeting, I am going to suspend the plenary for one hour so that the various groups can meet. I would like to invite the four coordinators to meet me in the Salon français at 12.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 1.05 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The 768th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

As you know, I had suspended the plenary this morning in order to allow for consultations within the various groups. I have just held a session of Presidential consultations with the four coordinators concerning the draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, on the basis of the document of 22 May. It has emerged from these consultations that several delegations, in the various groups, have asked for time to consult their capitals and obtain instructions on this new draft decision. I shall keep the next President abreast of the situation.

Australia is asking for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): I am sorry to take the floor as you are about to close the session, Madam, but before you do, I think it is important that we take one decision, and that is this: I would like to table a formal proposal on the question of the appointment of a special coordinator for landmines, which I understand has been the subject of these informal consultations. I shall give the text of the proposal to Mr. Bensmail and would ask that it be circulated as an official document of the CD. As that will take some time, perhaps I should take a moment just to briefly read out that proposal so it is clear to all what it is that I am putting forward. The proposal is:

"Draft decision

"Without prejudice to, and within the context of, its urgent ongoing efforts to establish a programme of work for its 1997 session and to set up mechanisms, as appropriate, for other agenda items of the Conference, and in order to facilitate these efforts, the Conference on Disarmament decides:

"1. To appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6.

"2. The special coordinator shall take into consideration all relevant proposals and views, present and future.

"3. The special coordinator shall present an early report to the Conference on Disarmament."

The Australian delegation would hope that you would take the earliest possible opportunity to have the Conference pronounce on this proposal.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Australia for this proposal. The secretariat has taken due note of the proposal and will do everything necessary to ensure that this draft decision can be distributed as rapidly as possible. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have to apologize. I know the hour is late, and you are about to close the meeting. Nevertheless, based on the information we have received as far as yesterday's Presidential consultations are concerned, the President apparently intended to hold informal Presidential consultations to discuss all proposals. I am not certain whether that is something still being considered or whether we will have those informal consultations between now and next week. It was suggested to start them this afternoon - or shall we just wait for instructions? I know the situation is frustrating, but nevertheless my delegation believes that we must continue consultations in a manner in which we will be kept aware of any developments that may take place. Otherwise, we will just be in a wait-and-see situation until next week, which may not be the most appropriate way to proceed.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Just to put on record that, as I announced in my statement today, my delegation would accept the decision in the terms that have just been read out by the representative of Australia.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico.

I would like to answer the question raised by the representative of Iran. Open-ended informal consultations were being considered, but the Presidential consultations that I held at 12.30 unfortunately did not lead to agreement among all the groups to hold these unofficial open-ended consultations. One group felt that, as the consultations were to allow us to take into consideration all the drafts before the Conference, including the new draft decision circulated this morning, it could not agree that open-ended unofficial consultations could be held under the circumstances.

I am now coming to the end of my term as President of the Conference on Disarmament. When I took on these functions I was aware of the immensity and the complexity of the task on which I was embarking with apprehension, but also with the profound feeling that we were all determined to spare no effort to emerge from the deadlock. The difficulties we had encountered in drawing up the agenda of the Conference at the beginning of our session certainly gave us grounds for thinking that agreement on a balanced programme of work giving equal prominence to the interests, concerns and priorities of everyone would be difficult. However, all the praiseworthy efforts of my two predecessors to this end were unsuccessful. I myself made a modest attempt to find ways and means to bring the Conference out of the current deadlock, and to ensure that we could finally get down to our substantive work. Unfortunately all attempts to open the way to wisdom and to create the conditions for a balanced and measured approach to our programme of work have thus far proved fruitless. At times we thought that we could blame our difficulties on the rigidities of the Conference and what was deemed to be the untransparent process of consultations among the various groups in the Conference. But we must acknowledge that neither the open-ended informal consultations nor the discussions in plenary have brought any more clarity or transparency to our discussions, and have sometimes even contributed to making positions more rigid. I will therefore not surprise anybody when I say that it is not so much our established working methods and procedures which hinder progress, but rather the persistence of fundamental differences concerning the priorities attached by the different parties to the items on the agenda of the Conference, even in a context which is at last free of the influence of the cold war.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for your encouragement and your support. My thanks go, in particular, to the coordinators of the groups and the representative of China for the cooperation they have displayed during my term. My task was greatly facilitated by the entire team of the secretariat of the Conference and the interpreters, under the authority of our Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and I would like to pay tribute to them for their devotion and efficiency. The assistance of the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, has been very valuable to me. I have been able to appreciate his competence, his integrity, his deep knowledge of issues and procedures and his unlimited readiness to help. May these words serve to reflect the extent of my gratitude.

It remains for me only to wish my successor in this post, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská, much success and to promise her my full cooperation in her task.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 26 June at 10 a.m. Before I adjourn the meeting I would like to inform you that the Group of 21 will be meeting in this room at 3.30 p.m. with interpretation.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.769/Corr.1
28 July 1997

ARABIC AND
ENGLISH ONLY

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Corrigendum

The second and third lines of the title page of CD/PV.769, dated 24 June 1997, should read:

"Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 24 June 1997, at 10 a.m."

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.769
24 June 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 24 June 1997, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mrs. Krasnohorská	(Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 769th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before giving the floor to the first speaker on the list, I should like to make some opening remarks.

It is a great honour and responsibility for me to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of the Slovak Republic. I should like to emphasize that no effort will be spared on my part in discharging my duties as the President of this august body.

First of all, I wish to express my deep gratitude to my predecessors, Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, Mr. Grecu from Romania and Ambassador Sun of the Republic of Korea, for all the efforts they made to bring about the agenda and the programme of work for this year's session. I am also very grateful to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all their staff, and I am convinced they will be of great assistance in performing my functions as the CD's President.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the only multilateral forum for concrete negotiations on arms control and disarmament, has played an important role in the modern history of mankind. It has achieved many successes in negotiating and finalizing important disarmament treaties and conventions. Let me mention at least the recent ones - the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the Convention on Chemical Weapons. Slovakia therefore attaches the utmost importance to the Conference on Disarmament with its unique functions, and follows its activities with great attention and interest. This claim was recently confirmed by the visit of the Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, who spoke to the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament last week. Among other assertions, she said: "The history of the last 50 years has unequivocally proved that the United Nations Organization has been an irreplaceable institution contributing to the solution" of the questions of international security, stability, peace, arms control and disarmament. "The Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors that belong to the large United Nations family has gained a great reputation by its expertise, perseverance and mainly by its achievements". I wish to stress that the words by my Minister emphasizing the importance of the Conference on Disarmament recall not only the satisfaction, but also the obligation, we feel towards the Conference on Disarmament in the narrow sense, and the international community in the broad sense.

It is understandable that after important achievements by international bodies, including the CD, a crossroads comes that represents a major challenge. This challenge requires that all participants analyse the past and look to the future with a certain distance and political wisdom. But if I can again use the words of my Minister, the Conference on Disarmament nowadays "does not seem to be making full use of the opportunities offered to it". The progress seems to be too slow and painstaking, the positions of some delegations rather inflexible. I believe that mutual confidence, pragmatism and concentration on the issues that join us, rather than those that separate us, is the only way to proceed. It is highly important to preserve the momentum created by international changes and make full use of the present window of opportunity. The Conference on Disarmament has a great role in this process. Its eventual inability to adapt to the new tasks would have a detrimental effect on its relevance and position in the international mechanism for arms control and disarmament. The role of the Conference must be not only preserved but reinforced, too. I believe that creating linkages between substantive elements of the CD's work will not be conducive to progress. On the other hand, there is a realistic threat that the linkages will be counter-productive and endanger progress even on those elements where progress is possible. The CD certainly has to address the most pressing issues. Today these issues are the question of nuclear weapons on the one hand and conventional weapons on the other. The CD should no longer delay discussion on what further role, if any, it could play in nuclear disarmament, and identify the specific issues it could embark upon. Meanwhile, it should concentrate on issues that seem to be the least controversial and where progress seems to be within reach. I pledge to all of you that I will spare no effort in contributing to the achievement of this goal. In the post of President, I will do my utmost to ensure the success of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I rely on your assistance in dealing with the important tasks which lie ahead. We must try to achieve progress and start working before the end of the second part of the CD's 1997 session.

Before concluding, I should like to touch upon another important issue, namely, the expansion of the CD. My country has recent memories of being an observer and therefore fully understands the applicant States. The CD should remain open to all candidates. With this in mind I intend to hold consultations on the possibility of nominating a special coordinator for CD expansion with a broad mandate to explore possible modalities and ways forward.

(continued in French)

On my list of speakers today I have the representative of the United States of America, Ms. Crittenberger, to whom I now give the floor.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Madam President, as you enter upon your public duties as President of the Conference on Disarmament, it is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome you, as well as congratulate ourselves that the progression of the alphabet has put you in the Chair at this important juncture. The United States regrets that in spite of the energetic efforts by both of your two immediate predecessors, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Diallo of Senegal - as well as the energetic efforts of their two predecessors - the Conference remains just as deadlocked as it was on 21 January, our first plenary this year. From that time forward you were the fifth person to have assumed these burdens. The delegation of the United States pledges our full cooperation as you, in turn, seek to launch the Conference's substantive work on the vital issues it is charged to examine.

The United States takes very seriously our obligation under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". In the particular context of the commencement of the strengthened review process agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of Parties to the NPT, the United States, along with the delegations of China, France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, expressed our determination to continue to implement fully all the provisions of the Treaty, including those of article VI.

Bearing this in mind, along with other important factors, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Lafer and his distinguished colleagues from Brazil in connection with President Cardoso's announcement on 20 June that he was submitting the NPT to the Congress for ratification. The United States welcomes this step, since Brazil's adherence to the NPT will make an important contribution to ongoing efforts to strengthen the international regime for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The NPT and its article VI are likewise relevant here in the Conference on Disarmament. All of us are affected by steps undertaken in regard to the implementation of these commitments. In this context, the United States supported adoption last December of General Assembly resolution 51/45 G, which invites the nuclear-weapon States and others "to keep States Members of the United Nations duly informed of the progress and efforts made". For this reason, Ambassador Berdennikov and I requested that the joint statements issued by President Clinton and President Yeltsin in Helsinki be circulated as a formal document of the Conference. These are contained in document CD/1460. In part, our two Presidents agreed that after START II enters into force, the United States and Russia will immediately begin negotiations on a START III agreement. That agreement, in turn, will involve total reductions of 80 per cent from peak levels during the cold war. In addition, the United States and Russia will seek to incorporate "measures relating to the transparency of strategic nuclear warhead inventories and the destruction of strategic nuclear warheads ...". This will be the first time in the history of strategic arms control and disarmament that our two countries will seek to formulate measures that will eliminate warheads, not just delivery vehicles.

In regard to nuclear arms, bilateral negotiations work. They have succeeded in the past, and they remain intensely needed now. The Conference on Disarmament is not the appropriate forum to pursue agreements to reduce nuclear arsenals - at least not at this stage. However, we remain convinced that the Conference on Disarmament has substantial contributions to make in regard to the wider or more general process of nuclear disarmament, those broad undertakings which have practical implications for all or nearly all the world's nations. Viewed from this perspective, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty falls squarely within the nuclear disarmament process. We believe that in practice, as its preamble states, the CTBT will constrain the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, and that it will end the development of advanced new types.

On a multilateral level, the next logical step is for the CD to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and

(Ms. Crittenberger, United States)

effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator dated 24 March 1995 and contained in document CD/1299, and the mandate contained therein. We strongly agree with an eloquent remark by Italian Ambassador Balboni Acqua during his statement last Thursday: "It is inconceivable to permit fissile materials to be manufactured while nuclear tests are being banned and existing fissile material is being destroyed."

When he spoke here on 15 May, United States Arms Controls and Disarmament Agency Director John Holum stressed the CD's successful history of using practical, problem-solving, step-by-step methods to negotiate and conclude treaties on major disarmament issues. He noted that we need to adopt this practical approach once again in order to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Nuclear-weapon States have ceased to produce fissile material, but this change in policy occurred only recently. A fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) would codify this in a legally binding, verifiable, and global agreement. The nuclear-weapon States would then be asked to accept a permanent legal constraint embodying what is now only a voluntary, and reversible, policy. This, in practice, would place an upper limit on the amount of fissile material than can ever be used for nuclear weapons. After nuclear-weapon States have disposed of highly enriched uranium or plutonium removed from existing nuclear weapons, they could not compensate for that by adding to their stockpiles of fissile material.

Reprocessing and enrichment facilities produce new fissile material, so the FMCT will put all those facilities under safeguards. That will ensure they are used solely to produce fissile material for peaceful purposes - research, medical isotopes, reactor fuel, and other non-explosive uses. In practice, fissile material is the modern chokepoint in creating or enlarging nuclear stockpiles. Even a State that knows how to make nuclear weapons cannot manufacture them unless it has adequate fissile material on hand.

All those who consider nuclear disarmament a priority for the Conference on Disarmament should look upon the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty as an important and positive step. It is difficult to imagine how nuclear arms reductions can proceed much further unless there is a dependable limit on nuclear materials and confidence that the international community will be able to detect clandestine production.

As we are meeting this very morning, colleagues of mine and, I believe, members of various other delegations, will have arrived in Brussels to begin attending a special conference to discuss the need for a comprehensive global ban on anti-personnel landmines (APL). Representatives of the United States are attending the Brussels conference as observers because we continue to believe that the Ottawa Process can provide useful political momentum to the wider overall effort to ban APL. On the other hand, the United States remains convinced that the CD offers the most practical and effective forum for negotiating a comprehensive global ban on APL. Many politically and militarily important nations are not full participants in the Ottawa Process, and a number of them have announced that they will not be bound by any draft treaty negotiated without their full and active participation. To rid the world's arsenals of landmines, we need to negotiate here in the Conference on Disarmament.

To be quite candid, we have been discouraged at the long list of procedural objections that have persistently impeded efforts in this Conference to initiate appropriate negotiations on anti-personnel landmines. We understand that a significant number of member States have security concerns which they believe must be addressed, and we are confident that CD members will take account of those concerns during negotiations in this body. In order to facilitate prompt agreement to start CD negotiations on anti-personnel landmines, the United States strongly supports Australia's proposal for the appointment of a special coordinator to conduct consultations and present an early report. This is the proposal contained in document CD/1465.

As members are well aware, this draft decision is very similar to a previous proposal of Australia's, contained in document CD/1458, that was discussed in an informal meeting on 22 May and significantly edited as a result. The current proposal is thus at least the grandson of Australia's original wording, but a more candid genealogy would at least reach back to the text proposed by Finland, Chile and Poland on 27 March and contained in document CD/1452. By that account, it is almost two months since CD members began actively discussing the appointment of a special coordinator on APL. Even so, historical completeness would lead us to recall brief comments by Ambassador Munir Akram, the distinguished representative of Pakistan, during his plenary statement on 30 January (PV.753). In those remarks, Ambassador Akram advocated that the international community "explore, in the CD, the further measures we can take to move towards the ultimate goal of prohibiting anti-personnel landmines without jeopardizing the security of States. We propose that a special coordinator be appointed to conduct such an exploration and evolve appropriate terms of reference for negotiations in the CD on anti-personnel landmines."

The United States is pleased to remind the Conference of this 30 January proposal of the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan, and in substance we support it. As a practical matter, Australia tabled the wording of the draft decision that is now before the Conference, and we see no reason for further delay. The United States believes that Australia's proposal is ripe for action, and we urge that the Conference approve it promptly and in that context, I request that today you ask delegations to take the decision on the proposal contained in document CD/1465.

Excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms pose a grave threat to international peace and security, and with this in mind the United States strongly believes that the CD should re-establish its former Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments. The topic is at least as relevant now as in 1992, when the CD added transparency in armaments to its formal agenda, or in 1993, when the CD first established an Ad Hoc Committee to address it. Unfortunately, however, the AHC met last in 1994, even though world attention has continued to increase in the three succeeding years. Over

(Ms. Crittenberger, United States)

130 different nations have submitted data on arms transfers since the United Nations Register was established, and the 1997 Group of Governmental Experts on the Register is currently conducting the second of its three sessions. Last year, the United Nations Disarmament Commission issued a consensus report on arms transfers and regional organizations are devoting substantially greater attention to transparency in armaments. For example, the Organization of American States has decided to establish a western hemisphere register of APL holdings.

In this context of innovation and ferment, the CD should continue to explore how the nations of the world can increase international confidence by making their military preparations more open and transparent. With that in mind, the CD should re-establish its Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments, a step that in the view of my delegation is long overdue.

The United States can understand the strong interest of observer countries that have applied for admission as full members of the Conference. We believe that the CD should examine this question with the utmost seriousness, and we continue to believe that there is a consensus for the CD to appoint a special coordinator for that purpose. The United States supports that idea. We would likewise support a decision by the President of the Conference to appoint a Friend of the Chair instead, if there continues to be significant difficulty in identifying an appropriate person who would agree to serve as special coordinator. In terms of the underlying issues, however, we believe the question of further expansion of the Conference is closely linked with its improved and effective functioning. The CD has not yet been able to carry out significant substantive work this year, and it is difficult to envision an overall outcome whereby the CD remains deadlocked on all work on the table, yet proceeds to decide to add chairs around it.

We are nearing the end of the second part of our 1997 session, and perhaps it is not too soon to begin thinking about what kind of report we shall submit to this year's session of the General Assembly. Shall we simply say that we engaged in endless debate, encompassing plenary meetings, informal plenary meetings, open-ended consultations, and meetings of regional and political groups and other impromptu gatherings too numerous to mention? Shall we then, at the end of this long and depressing account, merely add that we were unable to agree to do anything on any of the topics before us?

For our part, we believe it should not be so, that we have it in our power to prevent the ridicule and scorn which such a report would undoubtedly arouse among our colleagues in the First Committee and delegates in New York. We still have both the means and the time to take decisions that would enable the Conference to prepare a report more worthy of our national goals and the collective aspirations of the international community.

Yes, sessions of the Conference on Disarmament certainly do enable us to put forward national views and debate the issues. I am portraying the views of my own country today, and I wholeheartedly support and defend the right of the representatives of other nations to do likewise. But, in the ultimate analysis, we are not here to debate, we are here to negotiate. The world community encompasses many bodies that debate issues related to arms control and disarmament, but this is the only global body that can negotiate on them. If we neglect our mandate to negotiate on multilateral issues that are ripe for action, if we merely continue to debate, debate and debate, the international community may well tire of us, this institution and this place.

I hope not, for the United States continues to believe that the Conference on Disarmament can make an important and meaningful contribution that will enhance international peace and security. But getting to that point will require a collective decision by members of this body that the limits of rhetoric and procedural manoeuvre have already been explored, and that now it is time for us to act on issues ripe for real negotiations here. This is what we seek, and what we hope will actually happen.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I have no more speakers on my list for today. Would any other delegations like to take the floor at this stage?

[continued in English]

Delegations have heard the request by the distinguished representative of the United States to adopt a decision promptly on the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel mines. Are all delegations ready to adopt the decision as contained in document CD/1465 at this stage?

[continued in French]

I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Goonetilleke.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): Madam President, I should begin by congratulating you on assuming your duties as President of the Conference. I should also like to congratulate the past President, the Ambassador of Senegal, for conducting the responsibilities in a very efficient manner. If you recall, when we met at the plenary last Thursday, the President informed this Conference that the next plenary would be held on Thursday next, that is, two days from now and, in keeping with this particular decision, I believe many delegations would have informed respective capitals with regard to the position on this particular decision. Certainly, my delegation communicated the information to our capital with the hope of receiving instructions in time for the next plenary meeting. In view of the above, I wonder whether it is possible for us to reach a decision on this matter, as decided by the Conference earlier, at our next plenary meeting to be held on Thursday. This is merely a request in keeping with the decision which we adopted at the last plenary meeting.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

[continued in English]

Drawing conclusions from the short discussion, I have to state that there are still delegations that need more time to obtain instructions from their capitals, and the Conference on Disarmament is therefore not ready to adopt the decision on the appointment of the special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines at this stage. I therefore appeal to all delegations to do their utmost in order to enable the Conference to decide on the appointment of the special coordinator on landmines before the recess, that is at the last plenary meeting of the second part of the session on Thursday, 26 June 1997.

[continued in French]

I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): I wanted to express the regret of my delegation that it appears that we are not in a position to take a decision today on the proposal contained in document CD/1465, and I respect your conclusion, Madam, that we indeed are not in that position. I would express the hope that, in light of the fact that we were all notified last Friday that there would be a plenary today, instructions would be received expeditiously, and that we would be in a position to take a positive decision on Thursday.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America.

I would like to inform you that I held some bilateral consultations yesterday and I intend to continue with informal consultations open to all delegations after Thursday's plenary meeting, in order to consider all the existing proposals on the programme of work of the Conference. I would like to study with delegations the best way of approaching the complex question of the programme of work, since several approaches exist. What form of consultations would be the most effective? Should we begin with the oldest proposals or with the most recent ones? Should we discuss the agenda as a whole or specific items separately? There are many questions and I hope that you will help me to find the right answers.

I see that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Allow me first of all, Madam President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of our Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank H.E. the Ambassador of Senegal, your predecessor, for all her efforts to enable our Conference to reach a successful conclusion of the second part of this year's session. Madam President, my delegation requests you to hold informal consultations at the end of today's plenary meeting concerning the proposal made by the Group of 21 on the programme of work contained in document CD/1462.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. Would any other delegations like to take the floor at this stage?

I wish to announce that I will hold informal open-ended consultations immediately after the end of this plenary session.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 26 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.770
26 June 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 26 June 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Krasnohorská (Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 770th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On my list of speakers today I have the representatives of Japan, Poland, New Zealand, Brazil, Chile, China, Germany and Cuba. When we have reached the end of the speakers' list, as I indicated at the end of the plenary meeting last Tuesday, I intend to submit to the Conference for approval the draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines presented by Australia in document CD/1465. I will also invite the Conference to take a decision on the request made by Georgia to participate as an observer in our proceedings during 1997. With your approval I intend to invite the Conference to take a decision on Georgia's request without considering it first in an informal meeting.

As you know, four of our colleagues, Ambassadors Kurokochi of Japan, Dembinski of Poland, Armstrong of New Zealand and Berguño of Chile, will no longer be among us when we resume our proceedings for the third and final part of our session at the end of July, as they have been called to other duties after having served their Governments and this Conference with great talent and distinction. I would like to commend their contributions to our work in often difficult conditions and, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, wish them as well as their families much success and happiness, and assure them of our friendship.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Kurokochi.

Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan): Madam President, may I at the outset congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament? I wish you every success in guiding the work of the Conference at this difficult juncture, which may require your continued efforts even during the inter-sessional period. I pledge the fullest cooperation of my delegation to your endeavour. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for the kind words you spoke about those of us who are leaving the Conference at the end of this session. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to your predecessors, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, for their untiring efforts to lead our work.

It is my great pleasure to make the following two announcements today concerning measures that Japan took recently. First, on 10 June, the Government of Japan notified the United Nations Secretary-General that Japan would consent to be bound by the amended Protocol II on mines, booby-traps and other devices, and the additional Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons, annexed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). As a result, the number of States, including Japan, which have notified their consent to the Protocols became five for Protocol II and seven for Protocol IV as of that day. The Government of Japan hopes that the two protocols will enter into force as early as possible. In particular, we believe that Japan's adherence

(Mrs. Kurokochi, Japan)

to Protocol II, which contributes to the early entry into force of the Protocol, has great significance as part of international efforts toward resolving the landmine problem.

Second, on 6 June, the Japanese Diet approved the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. Accordingly, the Government of Japan will deposit an instrument of ratification with the United Nations Secretary-General early next month. It is our sincere hope that all States, especially those States whose ratification is necessary for the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to go into effect, will follow us, enabling the CTBT to enter into force as soon as possible.

These two decisions are recent examples of Japan's efforts to contribute to international disarmament. I would like to take this opportunity also to welcome on behalf of my Government the decision by President Cardoso of Brazil announced on 20 June to submit the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to the Congress for ratification. Needless to say, the NPT is one of the most important international regimes for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The NPT is now enjoying almost complete universality with only a very few exceptions. Brazil's important decision this time will certainly contribute to strengthening the international effort toward nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Now that we are at the end of the second session of the CD, and that I am speaking for the last time at the CD plenary, I refrain from elaborating Japan's positions on disarmament issues, which have already been stated on a number of occasions. Instead, today, I would like to share with you my personal observations on the working methods of this Conference on the basis of the experiences I have had since I arrived here in early 1995. I do so with humility in view of the relatively short period of time I served here compared with some of our colleagues who have much longer experience and great insight into the working of this body. However, it is with a feeling of satisfaction that I recall these years because I was able to participate in the international disarmament efforts which produced a number of significant results. The indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the amendment of Protocol II, as well as the adoption of Protocol IV to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons are some examples of our achievements. In addition, we are now in the process of strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. I consider myself fortunate to have been here during this period of historic importance. Having said that, I must express my deep regret that the CD, since the beginning of this year, has not started substantial work on any of the issues on our agenda. In particular, despite the fact that we all agreed to establish an ad hoc committee on a so-called fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) two years ago, when I had the honour to hold the presidency, we have not yet seen any prospect of starting negotiations on an FMCT soon because of well-known reasons.

If I may venture a frank observation, it seems to me that one of the reasons for the stalemate we are faced with today lies in the way of application of the consensus rule. I am fully aware that the consensus rule is indispensable to the CD as a basic rule for disarmament negotiations, in which every participant tries to find a mutually acceptable solution, while the security concerns pertaining to each country are well protected. I dare say, however, that each member country should restrain itself from blocking the proceedings of the CD except when it needs to protect its basic security interests. When a point at issue is a procedural matter which does not prejudge the question of substance, every country should refrain as much as possible from exercising a veto. I might also add that the same practice could apply in cases of treaty negotiations. As Ambassador Dembinski of Poland stated on 22 May, it is the sovereign right of each country whether it accepts or adheres to any treaty after it is agreed and opened for signature, and no country is obligated to do so. In this sense, I wonder if it is the real aim of the consensus rule to deny the will of a majority of CD members which strongly hope to move forward treaty negotiations where there is already an agreed mandate, as in the case of FMCT negotiations. The most important thing is not to make the CD a captive to the linkage strategy because it will prevent progress in the CD. We must take a first step on whatever is agreeable. Beyond the CTBT and an FMCT, as an agenda for the international community as a whole, we should continue our efforts to find appropriate and possible issues for negotiations in the CD in the field of nuclear disarmament. It could be done by appointing a special coordinator, as my delegation proposed during the first session. In my view, both nuclear-weapon States and Non-Aligned Movement countries should take a more flexible attitude on the issue of nuclear disarmament. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to provide for a forum where a frank exchange of views can take place and thus enhance mutual trust and confidence. I believe that the best way to start this process is to appoint a special coordinator.

With regard to the format of consultations, as pointed out by Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco on 15 May, many of us feel that the present method of Presidential consultations needs improvement. It is obvious to anyone that the grouping mechanism as we have today does not appropriately reflect the real picture of today's international society. On the other hand, it is also true that modifying the present grouping system is not an easy task. Until and unless we come to agree on an alternative approach, it might be beneficial to make more frequent use of open-ended informal Presidential consultations or a format similar to the open-ended bureau meetings which served as a useful tool during the CTBT negotiations in which each member could express its own views freely, as past experiences showed. In order to ensure continuity, the Presidential troika (including the previous and incoming Presidents) should play an active role in such consultations.

Moreover, the question of CD expansion, with 20 countries on a waiting list, has serious implications for the operation of the CD. Bearing this in mind, I feel that perhaps the time has come for the CD to examine carefully various aspects of its working method. In this sense, the G-21 proposal on the programme of work contains a very useful proposal in paragraph 4 for appointment of special coordinators on related issues, which merits serious consideration by the CD.

(Mrs. Kurokochi, Japan)

It is my sincere hope that the CD will start its substantial negotiations as soon as possible and regain the spark of life it showed in the past two years. Finally, I would like to conclude my statement by expressing my wholehearted gratitude to all delegations, Mr. Petrovsky, Mr. Bensmail and other members of the CD secretariat, conference officers and interpreters, for the cooperation and help, as well as warm friendship, they extended to me personally and to the members of my delegation. I sincerely hope that the same support will be given to my successor.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Japan for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Poland, Ambassador Dembinski.

Mr. DEMBINSKI (Poland) (translated from French): Madam President, first of all I would like to thank you for the kind and generous words which you were kind enough to address to those of us who are going to leave this assembly in the near future.

(continued in English)

Allow me to congratulate you most cordially on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is particularly gratifying for me, personally, to address the Conference under your presidency since for many - I should say too many - years the presence of Slovakia among the members of the CD has been a constant concern of my delegation. You have assumed your responsibilities at a moment when the Conference is going through a particularly trying period. We trust that with your diplomatic talents and your quiet ways you will succeed in restoring constructive dialogue between us all in order to put this body once again on a positive course. In these endeavours you will have the full support and cooperation of the Polish delegation. Let me also pay due and most sincere tribute to your predecessors, Ambassador Diallo of Senegal and Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, for the dedication, skill and perseverance with which they sought to overcome the difficulties hindering our work this year.

It is the last time I take the floor in the Conference on Disarmament. I joined this body almost five years ago and thus have outlasted most of the colleagues who were sitting around this table in mid-1992. I cordially salute those who are still here. These last five years were probably the most fruitful in the entire history of the CD. In fact, they cover the final stages of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) negotiations and the entire process of putting together the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Both of these treaties are among the most important disarmament instruments concerning weapons of mass destruction ever adopted by the international community. Taking part in these negotiations along with so many outstanding, wise and seasoned diplomats and colleagues was a rare privilege. A most rewarding experience and a uniquely gratifying end of a career.

Unfortunately, after years of historic achievements, the CD seems to be at an impasse. A few weeks ago I addressed this issue speaking in the name of my Government. Today, I should like to venture a personal view on the reasons for this situation. Anyone who has had the privilege of serving on the Conference on Disarmament will certainly agree that in many respects this is a body which has a unique relationship with the United Nations and a unique place within the United Nations system. Certainly, this is partly due to this prestigious Salle du Conseil where most of our meetings take place. Indeed, this venue brings us in direct contact with the traditions of the League of Nations, which undertook serious, if unsuccessful, attempts to bring about a world free of arms. I would even venture to say that, set in these very special surroundings, the proceedings of the Conference on Disarmament have upheld something of the great tradition of multilateral diplomacy reminiscent of the times of the Congress of Vienna.

But unfortunately, this Chamber reminds us also of a more immediate past, namely that of the cold war. Probably, one could even maintain that the Conference on Disarmament is the last remaining body where the weight of the cold war still wields a strong influence. Each one of the organs and bodies of the United Nations system which is not directly provided for in the Charter was set up in order to address an issue, a set of problems or a situation arising at a given point in time. The various disarmament bodies of which the CD is a continuation were set up at the height of the cold war and of the East-West tensions. At that time, the rapidly growing number of missiles with nuclear warheads targeted by the two super-Powers at each other constituted a genuine threat of nuclear war with incalculable consequences for the entire world. My own country, Poland, because of its geographical location, was particularly exposed to the dangers of nuclear conflict.

At that dangerous time, negotiations related to nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament represented an efficient and legitimate method of seeking to check the nuclear arms race and avoid a worldwide nuclear conflagration. To make sure that negotiations between the two main protagonists and their allies, entrenched respectively in the tightly knit Eastern and Western blocks, were not stuck in ideological squabbling, representatives of non-aligned countries were invited to join in disarmament negotiations. As a group of countries vitally interested in the progress of negotiations and, at the same time, not involved in the ideological East-West conflict, they played a most useful role in narrowing the gaps and actively helping to search for platforms of understanding. It is in that triangular set-up that the major issues of the cold war agenda were dealt with, namely non-proliferation, chemical weapons and, finally, the prohibition of nuclear tests.

Now the cold war is over and its agenda has been exhausted. The major nuclear Powers, instead of targeting their deadly weapons at each other, work together on the most efficient, cost-effective and speedy ways of their dismantling. The costly competition in outer space has been replaced by a close collaboration in its peaceful exploration. The former Eastern and Western blocks, whose ideological confrontation was at the roots of the cold war, are merging and joining forces with a view to setting up new structures of a Pan-European security system. At the same time, new issues are emerging. They are in no way related to an improbable global conflict, but have a very

(Mr. Dembinski, Poland)

real and pressing humanitarian dimension. Anti-personnel landmines, and conventional arms in general, including small arms, have in the last decades claimed more lives than any known weapon of mass destruction.

Unfortunately, these new developments, strangely enough, have until now remained outside this Council Chamber. The Conference on Disarmament maintains its triangular structure, as if the Eastern and Western groups were still on the verge of a global conflict. Our agenda remains the same as it was 20 or more years ago at the height of the cold war. As it were, the CD reflects a bygone world and acts as if the clock of history had stopped at the threshold of the twenty-first century. It is therefore of no surprise that for the moment this important and supremely competent body seems unable to move forward. It is my fear that as long as the past of the cold war has not been exorcised, the CD will be hard put to face up to the challenges of the years to come.

Why should the CD stick to its no longer relevant triangular structure, rather than adopt the regional one which is in force throughout the United Nations system? Why should it not make a serious attempt to bring its agenda in line with the needs and expectations of the new emerging world? Why should it not examine a further expansion of its membership on the merits of each applicant, rather than invoke ideological arguments, including that of "regional balance"?

Nations have spent enough time, energy and money to invent, produce, accumulate and improve all kinds of deadly weapons, both more and less sophisticated and powerful. Today most States, including those with the biggest arsenals and most potent weapons, seem to agree that the time has come to begin the process of disarmament in earnest. The obstacles on this road no longer are ideological. They have become eminently practical, such as know-how and cost involved. Therefore, the international community seems to expect that, rather than spend precious time on ideological debates, the CD, the most competent body in the field of disarmament, would resolve to come to grips with the real practical issues. The fissile material cut-off is a point in case. By adopting a step-by-step approach, the CD can substantially contribute to ultimately alleviating the constant fear of a global conflagration which has been a permanent feature of international relations in the latter part of this century. The CD should also, in my view, turn its attention to arms which, rather than posing a hypothetical threat, actually kill thousands of innocent people virtually under our eyes. Anti-personnel landmines (APLs) are certainly among them.

In my private, well-considered view, the Conference on Disarmament has to stay open to all those who, rather than prestige, seek to, and are able to, make an effective contribution to its daily endeavours. It must persevere in the further streamlining of its methods of work in order, inter alia, to ensure all members of an equal and open say on all substantive issues without any constraints. I wish this body every success in the days, months and years ahead. It takes so little to succeed, they say. All one needs is the will to succeed.

Let me, in the end, express my friendship, gratitude and appreciation to the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, the members of the Conference secretariat and interpreters who, as usual, are remarkably competent. To all my colleagues and friends, best wishes for every success and personal well-being.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Armstrong.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (New Zealand): Madam President, New Zealand takes particular pleasure in congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of this Conference, the third CD President drawn from among the new members. I would like to acknowledge today the close cooperation New Zealand has always enjoyed with your predecessors. You may be sure of the New Zealand delegation's full cooperation during your term. I also pay a warm tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, for her hard work on behalf of the Conference.

This is the last occasion on which I will address the Conference on Disarmament, not because I am leaving Geneva but because New Zealand will be represented from the start of the third session by its first, newly appointed Ambassador for Disarmament. I am confident that he will enjoy the same friendly cooperation that all colleagues have extended to me over the past few years.

There is no doubt that this is a critical year for the Conference. The various successes of the recent past contrast with our inability today to reach agreement on the new issues to be negotiated. New Zealand is not among those fearing for the future of this body, however. True, we are facing a frustrating stalemate in our substantive work. Our procedures are tending to hinder rather than to help us find a way forward, and in that regard I welcome the positive practical suggestions we have heard this morning from Ambassador Kurokochi for review of working methods. Certainly, we have not yet been able to untangle the Gordian knot described last September by the Special Coordinator on the agenda, the distinguished former Ambassador of Algeria.

But on the other hand, there are proposals on the table for our consideration, and we expect that there will be more to come following the inter-sessional period. New Zealand will continue to join efforts to find the middle path. Agreeing on the issues on which we will work will require compromise and flexibility on all sides. New Zealand, for its part, is ready to start now on the cut-off negotiations, in accordance with the report of the Special Coordinator, in a way which acknowledges the different views that have been expressed as to its scope. We are also ready to begin in the Conference a multilateral dialogue on nuclear disarmament, including consideration of the next steps that this Conference could negotiate in pursuit of the elimination of all nuclear weapons, which, taken together with other tracks outside the CD, can be viewed as a part of a comprehensive programme. We would not object to the appointment of a special coordinator to consult on a possible mandate for negotiations on landmines when that decision comes before us today.

The Conference's potential to find a way through the current impasse is strengthened, I believe, by the expansion last June of its membership. If I am permitted a moment of retrospection, I want to recall the strong sense of common interest and cooperation that existed among 23 countries drawn from all political quarters and all parts of the world. We had a goal, and we found ways of working together to achieve it. The path was long and sometimes discouraging, but I have to say that it was always interesting, and it will remain one of the highlights of my time in this Conference.

If I have a parting message, it is to express the hope that the same common interest, and a willingness to cooperate across group lines, will be generated among the entire membership, and that in this way the Conference will be able soon to get down to work. Finally, I would like to thank all of my colleagues for the friendship and cooperation which I have always enjoyed in our work together, as well as my appreciation for the work of Mr. Petrovsky, Mr. Bensmail and all members of the CD secretariat.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of New Zealand for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Lafer.

Mr. LAFER (Brazil): Madam President, allow me at the outset to extend warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency. Your experience and diplomatic skill will serve the Conference well during these trying but challenging times. Be assured of my delegation's, as well as my own, full support and cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities. Having first discussed with you the issue of Slovakia's membership in the Conference on Disarmament, it is a pleasure for me personally and for Brazil to see you in the presidency. I also take the opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo of Senegal, whose serene and impartial search for consensus has won the admiration and respect of us all.

I take the floor today to announce to the Conference on Disarmament that on Friday last, 20 June 1997, the President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, requested Congressional authorization for Brazil to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This was referred to today by Ambassador Kurokochi in her statement, and I would like to thank her, and it was referred to in our last session by the United States delegation. May I now take this occasion to explain the process that led Brazil to this decision?

The President on 20 June stated that the decision "represents the conclusion of a process begun by Brazilian society itself". He recalled the 1998 Brazilian Constitution which provides in its articles that there must be peaceful coexistence among nations, and determines that nuclear energy be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. The decision follows a series of international commitments in the nuclear sphere undertaken by Brazil over the past years in close coordination with Argentina. Such commitments gave international expression to the above-mentioned constitutional determination, and contributed to maintaining a positive understanding with our Latin American neighbours and other international partners. They included the renunciation of the development of nuclear explosive devices, the creation of a Brazilian-Argentine inspection mechanism in the nuclear field, the full application of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, after an amendment process in whose successful conclusion I myself participated as the then Minister of External Relations of Brazil, and the negotiation of a full-scope safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

As is often stressed, measures such as these by themselves already offer legally binding guarantees of Brazil's unequivocal commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, a commitment made even clearer by adherence to the NPT. The world today is fundamentally different from that of nearly 30 years ago, when the NPT was originally conceived. The sombre perspective of a fourfold or fivefold increase in the number of nuclear-weapon States never materialized. Gone is the cold war. The escalation of the nuclear arms race has been superseded by a process of nuclear roll-back. Enduring nuclear arsenals are increasingly questioned from both outside and inside possessor States. Military nuclear doctrines seem outdated and unconvincing in attempting to justify the continued existence of nuclear weapons. As pointed out by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso himself, nuclear weapons, once at the heart of super-Power military planning, are today "increasingly seen only as a drain on resources and as a source of risk and uncertainty. Even within the nuclear Powers, public opinion is coming to acknowledge that the bomb only raises the level of insecurity". The NPT itself has become a more dynamic and a more universal instrument. The strengthening of its review process and the guidance provided by specific principles and objectives bring greater focus to Treaty obligations and goals, and reinvigorate the Treaty's institutional forums. States parties can have a more frequent say on all aspects of the Treaty, particularly on the attainment of goals in the fields of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament.

Adherence to the NPT will add one forum in which Brazil, in the words of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "will continue to work for general and complete disarmament on a balanced and secure basis. We will do it from within the Treaty, acting to correct its imbalances together with our main partners". In doing so, Brazil draws guidance from the continuity of objectives of its foreign policy in the interrelated fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. We thus continue to believe that the best guarantee against nuclear-weapon proliferation is to make sure that nothing remains to be proliferated - a certainty which can only be obtained by the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. That is why Brazil will continue to stand alongside those who strive for the commitment to such a goal by all States within realistic phases and time-frames. That is also why pursuing and bringing to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament have long been legitimate aspirations of the international community.

In my last intervention I stressed the importance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on 8 July 1996. It seems clear to me that negotiations on this matter, as the Court has said, are more than an obligation of behaviour. All States have a stake in their outcome, and therefore the right to press for their immediate commencement, as well as to participate in them. A related objective also worth mentioning here is the consolidation of the nuclear-weapon-free-zone concept. The recent recognition by the United Nations General Assembly that the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones is gradually freeing the entire southern hemisphere of nuclear weapons highlights a trend we intend to continue to foster and encourage as a concrete contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation.

To conclude, Brazil has an extensive history of participation in efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation. Our objectives in these areas are long-standing and have been clearly reaffirmed. Their attainment is a continuing aim of our policies. As President Fernando Henrique Cardoso himself has made clear, "joining the NPT ... will be yet another contribution Brazil makes to the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, Ambassador Berguño.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, I would like to express sincere appreciation for your kind words and good wishes to those of us who are leaving our posts in this Conference. It is really a great pleasure to see you conducting our debates. I wish you success and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I pay tribute to your predecessors, Ambassadors Berdennikov and Diallo, and I welcome the fact that, in keeping with long-standing practice in our Conference, you started your term by holding consultations with the Ambassador of Senegal. It is a significant circumstance that your countries and mine joined the Conference on Disarmament together, united in the endeavour to strengthen it and renew it radically.

In taking the floor for the last time in this chamber, I contemplate the dramatic murals with which José María Sert decorated this Council Chamber, which so appropriately evokes the Hispanic origin of international law by means of the bronze plaque bearing the illustrious name of Francisco de Vitoria; I observe the familiar faces of friends with whom we have shared events and negotiations of historic importance; I feel the attentive and unobtrusive presence of the secretariat, the voices of interpreters, the invisible trace of the translators; and the atmosphere which enriches our proceedings with a tradition, feelings and aspirations that are shared by different generations.

When I came to Geneva for the first time, more than a decade ago, I thought that the place with the most character, where the fabric of mysterious events was being woven, was the Green Room in GATT. Remote and distant from the tumultuous labours of UNCTAD, which a great Italian politician, Amintore Fanfani, described as the Eroica symphony of the developing world, the Green Room was more than a meeting place, it was a temple for initiates. In recent years I have penetrated, without yet finding my way, into this labyrinth of the Conference on Disarmament. Today I am sure that our chamber of marble and ochre tints, with its early twentieth-century decor, and especially the invisible walls of consensus and lack of consensus, not only has more character than the Green Room but leaves a mark on those of us who live in it temporarily.

In this universe we find ourselves facing our own reality. We wonder how we can ensure its materialization in a common undertaking: agenda, programme of work, subsidiary bodies, special coordinators, Friends of the Chair, a whole complex mechanism to secure what we call the effective functioning of the Conference. A system of arrangements that sometimes gives us the impression of 100 mirrors indefinitely reflecting the same image in time and space. I sincerely believe that this impression is only a momentary digression and actually I would like to expound my thoughts a little more and refer to the rules of procedure - a special subject, and one which is terribly Cartesian and devoid of the touch of poetry or nostalgia which usually prevails in a farewell speech.

While I will confine myself exclusively to this subject, without repeating our national viewpoints on matters of substance, which I have set out many times, I nevertheless wish to welcome Ambassador Lafer's announcement concerning Brazil's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, his reference to the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the southern hemisphere and the revision of the Treaty of Tlatelolco which we embarked on when he was a minister, in the historic Baron de Rio Branco room.

As the subject is a dry one, I wish to allay any misgivings among members of the Conference by saying that it will be elaborated on in a document that the Chilean delegation will pass to the secretariat. It is a proposal for the revision and updating of rules that the inexorable passage of time and the living practice of the Conference has made anachronistic and inapplicable; introducing in the body of those rules the decisions that have already been adopted and the agreed declarations by Presidents on matters of procedure; bringing the structure into line with a more logical arrangement; and clarifying, as far as possible, questions that, when they are removed from their procedural context, become obstacles to consensus. One of these matters is what is known as the programme of work. This programme, in the strict terms of rule 28, is nothing more than allocating a place, an order for dealing with the thematic elements contained in rule 27: it is only a bridge between an agenda item and the way of dealing with it, through a committee, or a coordinator, or a Friend of the Chair. In happier and more innocent times, free of original sin, all this work could be entrusted to the President, assisted by the secretariat, under rule 30.

From another aspect, rule 21 is solely an exhortation to achieve consensus and cannot become a means of creating linkages or blocking decisions. The Ambassador of Cuba made a comment in one of our meetings that sums up both the error into which we have fallen and the means to remedy matters. Whoever has legitimate problems with an agenda item or with provisions for dealing with it should say so. It would be really surprising to find that as a result all of us have one problem or another with one item or another and that as a consequence we have adopted an agenda whose application will have to be postponed indefinitely.

I recognize that the proposal submitted by Chile is not a simple codification and that it also contains elements of openness to the outside world, the one that is looking at us with ever greater frequency from the public gallery; of broader participation and greater clarification of the expansion mechanisms. These are matters that some might consider premature innovations. When the history of our rules of procedure is studied, there emerges the living reality, the functional organ in tune with the times, that this Conference on Disarmament has always been.

This is the image which I retain and which accompanies me and will continue to accompany me, at the moment when I bid farewell to you all; express my gratitude to Ambassador Petrovsky, Abdelkader Bensmail, all the members of this efficient secretariat; and express appreciation for the warm welcome, the friendship and the solidarity of all of us who are working for the noble goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Sha.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): First of all, Madam President, please allow me on behalf of my delegation to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you on your assumption of the CD's presidency. My delegation will cooperate fully with you. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my keen appreciation to the successive Presidents since the beginning of this year's session for their efforts aimed at an early start of the CD's substantive work. Availing myself of this opportunity, I would also like to bid farewell to our former colleagues who left their posts of heads of delegations to the CD this year. Their contributions to the work of the CD in the recent past, especially the negotiations on the CTBT, will be remembered for ever. Meanwhile, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the colleagues who have taken up their posts recently.

Today the Chinese delegation wishes to focus its comments on the issue of anti-personnel landmines (APLs). The APL issue has become a hot topic in recent years. Differing views have been expressed on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament. Some regard it as a purely humanitarian issue. Some believe that it falls within the realm of disarmament and national security. Others think it is an issue with both a humanitarian and a security bearing. Consequently, there are proponents of a total ban on APLs and strong opponents of such a ban who argue instead for appropriate restrictions on the use of APLs. There are still others who favour a phased approach leading towards the ultimate prohibition of such weapons. As to how to address the issue of APLs, some are bent on the “Ottawa Process" aimed towards a total ban; some regard the CD as the appropriate forum for negotiations; others maintain that the issue should be further handled within the framework of the amended landmine Protocol to the CCW. There are still others who have the benign hope that the three mechanisms may complement one another. In short, APLs have grown into a big issue though they remain simple weapons. In the light of this, the Chinese delegation believes it is necessary to clarify and reach some common understanding on the origin of the APL issue, thereby facilitating the pursuit of the best solution.

First, the origin of the APL issue. Any conventional weapon, including APLs, can be used to kill or injure people. This is a common fact. However, as a purely defensive weapon, the APL has received "special treatment". This is due to two reasons: the side effects of old-type APLs and their indiscriminate use; and the less than adequate post-conflict demining efforts. Therefore, in order to eliminate the APL's threat to innocent civilians, to facilitate post-conflict reconstruction and to resolve the so-called APL issue, efforts should be made in the above-mentioned two aspects. Sweepingly blaming landmines themselves or any use of APLs for all civilian casualties is not true to the facts, and such an attitude cannot constitute our starting point for addressing and resolving the landmine issue. It is important to come to such an understanding, since only after we have found the true cause of the issue can we proceed to seek fitting solutions.

Second, solutions to the APL issue. Proceeding from the above, the Chinese delegation holds that the fundamental objective in resolving the landmine issue should be the prevention of civilian casualties, with our efforts concentrated on clearing those old-type landmines, especially APLs, left over from past conflicts and overcoming the shortcomings of the old-type landmines and preventing their indiscriminate use. If the CD decides to address the landmine issue, it should seek solutions in these aspects.

The most pressing issue facing the international community is the early elimination of the threat posed by landmines to innocent civilians. Almost all such casualties have been caused by those landmines already deployed. So long as these landmines remain uncleared, people living in landmine-affected places cannot enjoy tranquillity, let alone a peaceful life and economic reconstruction. This problem will not be talked away, and the adoption of a convention on the so-called total prohibition of landmines will not offer an immediate solution. The international community has made some efforts and progress in post-conflict demining, but much more is called for. The Chinese delegation hopes that all capable countries, especially those developed countries with better financial resources, technologies and equipment, will make greater efforts to help remove landmines left over from past conflicts.

Furthermore, for various reasons, there are still many landmines on the territories of a number of countries deployed or abandoned by foreign troops. Some of them were abandoned during the Second World War. The countries concerned have requested that mine-deploying countries shoulder the responsibility for removing these landmines. The Chinese delegation is of the view that either for the purpose of resolving mine-related humanitarian concerns, or in the interests of fulfilling arms control obligations, the clearance of abandoned landmines should become an important part in the solution of the APL question. In this connection, reference can be drawn from the relevant provisions of the CWC. When addressing the landmine issue, the CD should seriously discuss the question of demining, including that of abandoned landmines.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that alongside efforts to clear landmines left over from past conflicts it is necessary to prevent the indiscriminate use of landmines, especially the old-type dumb mines. Only in such a way can we resolve the landmine issue once and for all. We are pleased to note that in May 1996 States parties to the CCW agreed to amend and strengthen the landmine Protocol. The amended Protocol expressly prohibits the use of undetectable landmines, bans the production of such landmines after 1 January 1997, and strictly confines the use of non-self-destructing landmines to perimeter-marked areas to ensure the exclusion of civilians. The Protocol sets forth technical specifications on self-destruction self-deactivation of APLs, thus restricting the military life of almost all APLs to 120 days. Considering the fact that the indiscriminate use of APLs mainly takes place in domestic armed conflicts and is committed by non-governmental military groups, the amended Protocol prohibits the transfer of any mine to any recipient other than a State and to States which are not bound by this Protocol, and extends the scope of application to armed conflicts not of an international character. These important new prohibitions and restrictions are of great significance for preventing the indiscriminate use of landmines and facilitating the removal of landmines already deployed. We are convinced that so long as all countries accede to and strictly abide by the amended landmine Protocol, the difficulties in post-conflict demining efforts will be greatly reduced and the question of civilian casualties can be thoroughly resolved.

Third, the total prohibition of APLs. The Chinese delegation never doubted the sincerity and enthusiasm of the countries concerned in promoting the total prohibition of APLs, and welcomes the unilateral national measures by some of these countries towards a total ban. China is in favour of imposing strict and feasible restrictions on APLs and their use, thereby achieving the objective of an ultimate ban in a step-by-step manner. We are of the view that though the total ban is aimed at realizing humanitarian ideals, the elimination of an entire category of purely defensive conventional weapons is obviously a major disarmament measure. Therefore, when addressing the APL issue, the dual aspects of humanitarian concerns and legitimate national security requirements have to be taken into consideration when formulating specific measures or steps. In the final analysis, ensuring national security itself is an important aspect of humanitarian concerns.

As for security purposes, the military value of APLs differs from country to country, from time to time and from place to place. Different countries have totally different degrees of reliance on APLs. For those countries possessing advanced weapon systems, which enjoy collective defence through military alliances and a better security environment and have experienced no major wars on their territories for a long time, APLs may not be of great military value. They may even regard other countries' APLs as a nuisance to their overseas military operations. However, for developing countries like China, which have long land borders and an uncertain security environment and lack advanced defensive weapons, APLs remain an indispensable, legitimate and conventional means of national defence. In fact, even some top military Powers in the world have indicated they also have security concerns that can be covered only by APLs.

In short, China is not opposed to the objective of prohibition of APLs realized in a phased approach, but cannot agree to an immediate total ban. In order to meet its legitimate territorial defence requirements, China cannot but reserve its legitimate right to use APLs on its own territories before alternative means are found and defensive capabilities established. China can only accept an international APL agreement that fully accommodates its above-mentioned security concerns. China has always pursued an independent foreign policy of peace and never engaged in overseas aggression. We have no intention of using landmines in other countries. Should China use APLs in legitimate circumstances, it would be for the purpose of defence against foreign military intervention or aggression, safeguarding its national unification and territorial integrity and ensuring a peaceful life for its own people.

Fourth, mechanisms for addressing the APL issue. There are several mechanisms at present for addressing the APL issue. Many delegations have voiced their views as to which is the best. The Chinese delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express its preference.

In the first place, there is the CCW mechanism. For addressing humanitarian restrictions on conventional arms, the ideal mechanism is the CCW and its protocols. First, the Convention covers many kinds of conventional weapons, including landmines, that are subject to humanitarian restrictions, thereby constituting an independent legal system of its own. Second, the conclusion of the landmine Protocol to the Convention and amendments to it have taken into account both humanitarian concerns and security interests and have accumulated experience in this regard. Third, the amended landmine Protocol has broadened its scope of application, remedied shortcomings relating to old-type landmines and set forth further restrictions on the use of landmines. Fourth, most countries capable of developing, improving and manufacturing landmines have acceded to the Convention. Fifth, the amended landmine Protocol stipulates that a conference of States parties should be held annually to review the operation of the Protocol, a provision not seen in any other multilateral disarmament agreements. The annual conference will also consider the development of technologies to protect civilians against the indiscriminate effects of landmines. Admittedly, a shortcoming of this mechanism is that the Convention lacks universal adherence. In fact, most countries which voted in favour of the fifty-first United Nations General Assembly resolution banning APLs, including some of the worst mine-inflicted countries, have yet to accede to the CCW and its protocols. It is safe to say that, if the amended landmine Protocol can be universally and strictly observed, the damaging effects of old-type long-life landmines will be eliminated and the use of landmines will be exclusively aimed at military targets. Therefore, judging by its objective nature, international legal obligations and the number of States parties, the CCW and its protocols provide us with the best mechanism to address the APL issue. The Chinese delegation prefers achieving the ultimate total prohibition of APLs in a phased approach within the CCW framework.

The second mechanism is the CD mechanism. Judging by their purely defensive nature and their limited impact on international security, landmines can hardly be treated as a priority item on the multilateral disarmament agenda. Moreover, the time is not ripe for the prohibition of small defensive conventional weapons like APLs. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the CD should instead concentrate on those arms control and disarmament issues that have a significant impact on international security and stability. In this regard, the Chinese delegation's position is clear-cut. Besides, it is obviously inappropriate for the CD to take up the APL issue alone and make no arrangements for other agenda items. Nevertheless, considering that the overwhelming majority of the CD members demand or are prepared to address the landmine issue at an early stage, the Chinese delegation is willing to show flexibility. We will not object to the appointment of a special coordinator in the CD to deal with the APL issue. For China, what matters is the objective of the negotiations, not the negotiating forum. If the CD decides by consensus to address the landmine issue, it should be capable of accomplishing the task given its function, representation, expertise and experience. In accordance with the guidelines adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission, any arms control or disarmament agreement should not in any way diminish national security. In addressing the landmine issue, it is imperative to accommodate both humanitarian concerns and national security interests, taking into account the specific conditions of different countries and bearing in mind the priorities and real effects in mine clearance, with a view to adopting proper and feasible measures that attract universal adherence and, in a step-by-step manner, realizing the ultimate objective of a total ban on APLs.

The third mechanism is the "Ottawa Process". The Chinese delegation has taken note of the intentions of the Ottawa Process to negotiate and conclude an international convention on a total ban on APLs before the end of this year. We respect the sovereign decisions of the participating countries and understand their humanitarian intentions and wishes. It is our view, however, that this process focuses solely on humanitarian concerns while neglecting or not adequately taking into account many countries' legitimate military requirements for the use of APLs in defending their territories. Furthermore, it takes no account of the universality that is crucial for any truly effective international agreement. Therefore, the practical value and realistic effects of this process are doubtful. We also note that some participants in the process are members of military alliances. The truth is that, even if these countries themselves ban landmines, they can still benefit directly or indirectly from the use of APLs in joint overseas military operations as their allied partners may not impose a total ban. In contrast, those countries outside of any military alliance and relying on themselves for national defence will have no access to such benefits. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether the Ottawa Process will have a negative impact on the authority of the CD as the "sole" multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and on the entry into force of the amended landmine Protocol to the CCW.

I now turn to China's actions in support of humanitarian efforts. China has made active efforts to accede to international humanitarian laws. China has always attached great importance to humanitarian laws applicable to war situations, and has taken concrete and effective measures to reduce human suffering caused by wars. Since 1929, China has been a State party to the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. In 1981, China participated in the conclusion of the CCW and its protocols and was among the first group of countries to sign and ratify these instruments. As a matter of fact, only 15 countries ratified the Convention in 1982, not including some countries which today seem to be very active. Subsequently, and proceeding from the same spirit, China participated in the negotiation and conclusion of the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons and the amendment of the landmine Protocol. China has made significant contributions to the enactment of new international humanitarian laws and to the enhancement of restrictions on APLs. The Chinese Government will, in a spirit of humanitarianism, consider positively the ratification of these protocols at an early date.

China strictly abides by the CCW and has carried out a large-scale demining campaign. Chinese troops strictly abide by the CCW and other relevant international laws. They confine their research on and use of landmines to the scope permitted by the CCW and have never violated the Convention. Proceeding from humanitarian considerations, China has never developed booby-traps. In order to protect civilians, Chinese troops carried out an unprecedented large-scale demining campaign from the beginning of 1993 to the end of 1994 in the border areas of the Guangxi Autonomous Region and Yunnan province. They removed nearly 1 million landmines and other explosive devices, opened up more than 170 routes for cross-border trade and transferred to the local people more than 90 million square metres of landmine-free areas which had been walked through by military mineclearers. This campaign provided a guarantee for the physical safety of the local people and their economic construction.

China has tried its best to provide assistance to landmine-affected countries. The Chinese Government has always been concerned about the civilian casualties caused by landmines in mine-affected regions and supported international humanitarian efforts to prevent the indiscriminate harming of civilians by landmines. China has provided demining equipment and training in demining free of charge to Cambodia and other countries. The Chinese Government will continue to support international cooperation in mine clearance and provide demining assistance within its capabilities to other developing countries.

China exercises strict control on the transfer of landmines. In order to prevent the indiscriminate use of landmines, China has always taken a very prudent and responsible attitude towards the export of landmines. China participated in the consensus of the forty-ninth United Nations General Assembly resolution on the moratorium on the export of APLs. In fact, since this resolution was adopted, China has not exported any APLs. During the CCW Review Conference in 1996, the Chinese Government solemnly declared that it would implement a moratorium on the export of APLs which are not in conformity with the technical specifications contained in the amended landmine Protocol. Therefore, as to the prohibition of exports of APLs, the amended Protocol has already entered into force for China.

On the issue of APLs, the Chinese delegation has taken a realistic and cool-headed attitude and an objective approach. We hope, with the help of an analysis of the root cause of this issue, to seek balanced and feasible solutions acceptable to all parties. In the light of the divergent views on this issue, the Chinese delegation is ready to join other delegations in further exploring this issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

My statement has been long and has taken up a great deal of time. However, this is the first time I have made a statement this year, so I apologize.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Germany, Ambassador Seibert.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Madam President, please accept my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference. We are fully aware that at the difficult juncture at which the Conference finds itself, the responsibility and burden of your office are particularly heavy. We trust, however, in your skilful stewardship to overcome the present stalemate and engage the Conference once again in meaningful substantive work. I want to assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation in this endeavour. In this context, I would also like to thank your predecessors, Ambassadors Diallo and Berdennikov, for their unrelenting efforts to this end.

When I first took the floor for a brief intervention at the end of May, I paid tribute to the outstanding achievements of which this Conference has every reason to be proud: the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which has recently entered into force, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. They are monuments of the disarmament process and far-reaching contributions to peace and stability. They have been the result of a strong commitment and of years of intensive, sometimes painstaking, negotiations. The Conference has thus set high standards for itself against which it will be measured by the international community. While it may not be possible to produce spectacular results every year, there is no justification for getting bogged down in an unacceptable stalemate.

The issue of a ban on anti-personnel landmines has been high on the international agenda both as a humanitarian concern and as an important arms control issue. Germany is fully committed to an early start of the envisaged negotiations in the framework of the Ottawa Process. At the same time, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament, given its universal role and its expertise in disarmament matters, should make its own important contribution towards the goal of a comprehensive and legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. We are deeply disappointed that the CD has been unable to date to reach agreement even on the appointment of a special coordinator whose task would have been to explore how the APL issue could be addressed by the CD. Instead, the Conference got entangled in a philosophical debate as to whether it should first decide on a special coordinator or on a work programme.

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

My delegation remains prepared to discuss any proposal on the table, including the very commendable effort by our previous Chairman, Ambassador Diallo, to seek common ground on the programme of work. The proposals made by Ambassador Diallo contain elements that Germany can fully support. Let me first recall that the Coordinator of the Western Group stated in the last plenary of last year's session that "ad hoc committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments". The Conference could, at this stage, at least have appointed a special coordinator on APLs and, if deemed useful, coordinators on a programme of work, the effectiveness of the CD and its enlargement. This might have provided a fresh impetus to our work.

In his statement of 23 January, my predecessor drew the attention of the Conference to the need for early negotiations on a multilateral, effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. Such a treaty would be an important contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament and, at the same time, also strengthen the NPT regime. Upon extensive in-depth consultations by Ambassador Shannon, the CD reached consensus in 1995 on a mandate for cut-off negotiations. It constitutes a solid basis for the CD to begin work immediately. By opening negotiations on a cut-off, the CD would also positively respond to resolution 48/75 L adopted unanimously by the forty-eighth United Nations General Assembly in 1993. With regard to the strengthening of the NPT regime, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Lafer on the decision by President Cardoso to submit the NPT to Congress for ratification. Germany welcomes this step as an important contribution to the efforts for achieving universality of the NPT regime.

The events during this session have demonstrated again the self-defeating effects of holding progress in one area hostage to progress in other areas. Linkages are a recipe for blocking any kind of progress in the CD and should be discarded once and for all. It is, in the view of my delegation, particularly inappropriate and illogical to maintain a linkage between a decision on the programme of work and the nomination of a special coordinator, whose task would be to explore the possibility of a consensus on including a specific item in such a programme of work. It is equally unhelpful to stress priorities if they are meant to exclude or deny other priorities. All issues should be examined on their own merits. The Conference should then take whatever steps are possible. They can provide a basis to build upon and to work for further progress. The procedural tug-of-war has not only been unproductive. It has also prevented us from focusing on important issues which are both urgent and ripe for negotiation. We welcome the valuable suggestions by Ambassador Kurokochi and Ambassador Berguño today to make the work of the CD more effective.

I am aware that I have been rather candid in some of my comments. But I have done so on behalf of a country which continues to believe in the unique vocation and the responsibility of the CD to maintain the momentum of the multilateral disarmament process.

I conclude by expressing our sincere hope that this Conference will resume its work at the end of next month with a renewed sense of commitment to engage in meaningful and substantive work, and thus live up to its responsibilities as the only permanent multilateral forum for global disarmament negotiations.

We fully support your efforts, Madam President, to consult informally with delegations during the inter-sessional period to ensure that the Conference will no longer squander its energies in rhetoric and procedural manoeuvres, but engage in what it is supposed to do - to conduct real negotiations with a view to enhance peace and security.

Finally, I should like to extend my warmest wishes to all Ambassadors who are leaving the CD and thank them for their friendship and cooperation.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Cuba, Ambassador Amat Fores.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, first and foremost allow me to convey my greetings to you and express our appreciation to you for the efforts you are making so that this forum will deal with questions related to the reasons for its existence, namely the attainment of effective disarmament measures. Our sincere gratitude also to the Ambassador of Senegal, who conducted the work of the CD before you with such dedication. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the secretariat and all those delegations which welcomed us with kindness four months ago when we took up our duties in this United Nations office and in particular at the Conference on Disarmament. You can be assured that the delegation of Cuba will work sincerely in the quest for the most appropriate and necessary solutions for the problems that fall within the remit of this Conference, in which we participate actively. We also say farewell today to those friends who are leaving their work in this Conference and wish them success in their lives and future work.

As early as his 1970 report, the United Nations Secretary-General said that "were such weapons [nuclear weapons] ever to be used in numbers, hundreds of millions of people might be killed, and civilization as we know it, as well as organized community life, would inevitably come to an end in the countries involved in the conflict. Many of those who survived the immediate destruction ... would be exposed to widely spreading radioactive contamination, and would suffer from long-term effects of irradiation and transmit, to their offspring, a genetic burden that would become manifest in the disabilities of later generations". To mention only one example of the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, let us remember what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, cities that were victims of the use of these weapons. Various estimates have been made of the casualties that were caused, but it is difficult to calculate the exact number of irradiated persons who may have died after having fled the cities. According to one of the sources consulted, in Hiroshima there were 78,000 dead and 84,000 injured, while in Nagasaki there were 27,000 dead and 41,000 injured. Also thousands of people were reported missing. These figures reflect only conservative estimates of the effects on people. What can we say about the devastating damage to the infrastructure of these cities and the long-term effects on the survivors and the genetic changes in the descendants of those persons? Of course, we are referring to tiny bombs compared with the present ones. Much of mankind seems to have forgotten these facts and the possibility that this may recur in completely different circumstances, in which the destructive power of nuclear weapons has increased in an immeasurable way.

Hand in hand with the qualitative and quantitative development of these weapons of mass extermination, increasing international concern emerged for their elimination. In 1978, at the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, it was recognized that nuclear disarmament was the priority. What has happened since then? What lesson has been learnt from the facts, and why does this Conference not pay attention to that which is a fundamental demand of the non-aligned countries but which should be a matter of concern for all? What happens is that a handful of countries which in other forums stand out as showing the greatest respect for United Nations resolutions and the recommendations and decisions of the international community in general take no notice in the Conference on Disarmament of, for instance, what was said by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion, or the provisions of the General Assembly resolution; or the considerations recorded by the eminent persons who participated in the study contained in the Canberra report; or the recommendations contained in the resolution of the Sub-Commission for the Protection of Minorities; or what the developing countries represented in the Non-Aligned Movement point out at their summits and ministerial meetings; or even what is said in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and what is being demanded of us by so many non-governmental organizations and eminent persons who are carrying out laudable efforts to create a world free of nuclear weapons.

The inflexibility of these few delegations has led this forum to consider forms and methods that would enable it to find ways and means of dealing with a category of conventional weapons - anti-personnel landmines. If there were understanding and the often referred-to flexibility, the solution could be also to negotiate on nuclear weapons, which have been described as weapons of mass destruction, and identify ways and means, within the context of the programme of work, that would make it possible to analyse other subjects such as security assurances for States that do not possess nuclear weapons and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, to mention only two topics that do enjoy priority.

We do not know how world public opinion will face up to the solution that some are trying to impose. What we do know is that if this Conference ignores the demands of the delegations of the Group of 21 and many other delegations concerning the treatment in this forum of a phased programme for nuclear disarmament, we will be able to consider this cause lost and we will be leaving in the hands of the nuclear Powers the decisions on what suits them best from the viewpoint of what they regard as their national security, threats and the role that these arms play in deterrence.

Let us not say we were not warned. As has already been said by one delegation in this forum, there is no balance between conventional and nuclear weapons, either in theory or on the battlefield. The use of anti-personnel landmines as legitimate weapons has not been banned. There has always been concern, a concern shared by Cuba, with regard to their indiscriminate and irresponsible use and the damage that they cause among the civilian population. To accommodate these concerns Protocol II to the 1980 Convention has been amended. If States comply with the provisions of this Protocol and the Convention itself there should not be any casualties to mourn. On the other side lie the problems that can be caused by mines in areas of past armed conflicts. We should address these problems as an immediate step. We have already informed the United Nations Secretary-General of our readiness to participate in these operations provided that they are of a humanitarian nature.

Humanitarian concerns are understandable when they are underpinned by policies of governments, organizations and eminent persons that are notable for genuine protection of the civilian population. This is not the case when the campaigns are pursued by countries that say they do not wish to see a maimed child, but do cause death and suffering through hunger for millions of children for other reasons such as economic blockades that do not differentiate between the various sectors of the population and prevent lives from being saved, including children's lives, because of the lack of a pacemaker or basic medication to alleviate suffering from cancer. We are making these few brief references to illustrate the fact that we are not convinced by all the organizers of campaigns regarding their motives, and we will never stop demanding that this Conference deal with nuclear disarmament. We are convinced that we are right and consequently we will continue to uphold our position. We hope we will continue to enjoy the help of those organizations which, like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, urge us not to give up, and at the same time we call on public opinion and the press to follow developments in this forum and not to allow the Conference on Disarmament to become a forum for non-proliferation or disarmament for the poor.

Let us ban the use of anti-personnel landmines for attacking other countries, let us strengthen the bans on their indiscriminate and irresponsible use, but let us not ignore the right of States, recognized in the United Nations Charter, to self-defence and the defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Some countries might find that mines are no longer useful and therefore they wish to ban them. However, the situation varies in different countries and regions, and this has to be borne in mind. Nuclear weapons, as has been shown, are of no military use, and yet certain countries that possess them refuse point-blank to abandon them and are not even prepared to enter into any commitment to that end.

We hope, Madam President, that you will begin urgent consultations on the establishment of a programme of work and the requisite arrangements to enable this Conference to address matters of priority for the international community. The delegation of Cuba will spare no effort to ensure that this is achieved satisfactorily.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I have no more speakers on the list for today. Would any other delegations like to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Moher.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Madam President, since we did not warn you and others that we were going to speak today, I shall try to be as succinct as possible. First of all, it is a pleasure to see you in the presidency and, as usual, Canada will try to be part of the solution to the CD problems, not part of the generation of those problems. I would like to obviously take advantage of this occasion to pay tribute to those of our colleagues who are leaving, whose company and professional cooperation we have enjoyed over the last two years that we have been here, and we wish them all the best obviously for the future. I should also like to express Canada's enthusiastic appreciation of the message delivered here this morning by Ambassador Lafer of Brazil.

With regard to CD work, Canada's views, I think, have been expressed here on several occasions, in January and again at the beginning of May, where we indicated that we think there are a number of elements upon which the CD could and should work, and we hope that a way will be found in the reasonably near future for us to actually get under way with regard to those elements.

But I would like to add just a couple of words on the anti-personnel landmine question. Canada has respected fully, we think, the views of countries with regard to this question, which we admit is a terribly complex and difficult one, and certainly the contribution by Ambassador Sha here this morning was very welcome, and there was much in what he said with which I agree. I certainly feel he can take all the time of this body he wishes to make his views known. And I do not propose to enter into any kind of debate. I just want to make four or five very quick observations. Firstly, Canada has not tried at any point to press the Canadian objective in the CD. That is because we have respected the variety of views in this room and the strongly held national opinions. Secondly, we have not at any point sought the endorsement by the CD of the Ottawa Process, for exactly the same reason. We have acknowledged fully the need for a multidimensional response or action plan to deal with the landmine problem. We share all of the views that Ambassador Sha expressed with regard to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the additional Protocol dealing with landmines. We agree demining is essential. We agree humanitarian assistance to victims is essential. We have also not objected at any time to the CD doing what it thinks it should and can do with regard to anti-personnel landmines. We have not objected to the idea of a special coordinator. We have no difficulty with the CD agreeing to a mandate which is a straightforward expression of what the CD wishes to do on anti-personnel landmines. So I think those various qualities have characterized Canada's approach to this question in the CD. But I think it is also essential that I make it absolutely clear that Canada's national objective - a ban, a comprehensive ban, on APLs - is one to which we attach very fundamental importance. We are going to pursue it as vigorously as we can. We think the value and validity of that objective stands up to any objective examination. We will work to achieve that objective in cooperation with all of those who feel in good faith that they share our views on that issue. This does not mean that we at any point tried to assess, evaluate, judge, condemn, whatever, the views of other countries. Brussels and Oslo are going to be significant steps forward to the signature in December of 1997, by as many States as possible, of a comprehensive ban agreement in Ottawa.

We continue to see the Ottawa Process as an extremely important, indeed essential and central element of a multidimensional approach to dealing with the terrible problem posed by anti-personnel landmines. We hope that the CD will be able to agree to its contribution to that multidimensional approach, but we would hope it can do so without entering into value judgments as regards other exercises.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Canada for his statement. Would any other delegations like to take the floor? None would.

As I announced at the beginning of the present plenary session, I now invite the Conference to express its view on the draft decision concerning the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, as contained in document CD/1465, it being understood that the adoption of this draft decision will open the way to the adoption of a programme of work of the Conference as soon as possible, and I promise that I will spare no effort to that end. May I take it that the Conference adopts the draft decision?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, now that we have adopted the draft decision presented in document CD/1465, I would like first of all to greet you as President of the Conference and thank you for the efforts that you have exerted and for the consultations that you have initiated from the outset in an attempt to reach consensus on this subject. At the same time, I would like to express my gratitude and esteem to the Ambassadors and colleagues who will soon be leaving us, namely Ambassador Kurokochi of Japan, Ambassador Dembinski of Poland and Ambassador Berguño of Chile. I wish to salute their efforts and their contributions, both in person and on behalf of the respective countries, to the work of the Conference. I also pay tribute to the statements they made while bidding us farewell after a period of intensive work in the Conference on Disarmament.

I would also like to endorse what those Ambassadors said concerning the need to improve the methods of work of the CD. From the beginning of the work of the Conference, the delegation of Egypt has stressed the need to appoint a special coordinator to finalize our joint efforts to improve the methods of work of the Conference and achieve progress in this respect in order to overcome the difficulties which we have faced since the beginning of the work of the Conference in view of the fact that there are some shortcomings and an

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(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

urgent need to review the rules of procedure in a manner consistent with the changing circumstances following the Conference's commendable efforts to benefit mankind by concluding a number of conventions in the negotiation of which I had the honour to personally take part, namely, the Convention banning chemical weapons and the CTBT convention which we negotiated and agreed together.

Now that we have adopted the decision concerning anti-personnel landmines which was presented by the delegation of Australia in document CD/1465, I am sorry to note that we adopted it without adopting a programme of work for the Conference. On behalf of the delegation of Egypt, in a number of statements that I made in the plenary meetings of the Conference and also during the negotiations and the informal Presidential consultations and in the Group of 21, I repeatedly said that, although I had no objection whatsoever, we could not choose one of the many topics submitted for discussion at the Conference on Disarmament, namely anti-personnel landmines, without first agreeing on a comprehensive programme of work for the Conference that would reflect the priorities of the international community. I would like to re-emphasize that, in our view, the issue of nuclear disarmament should be accorded the priority agreed by the international community, and the sole negotiating forum in this respect is the CD. We agreed on this in the decision on the "Principles and objectives" which was adopted at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference in 1995. We mentioned that the priority topics included the question of nuclear disarmament and that the only forum in which this topic could be dealt with in a multilateral framework was the Conference on Disarmament.

Nevertheless, as I said before, the nuclear Powers are able, and have the right, to negotiate a reduction in nuclear armaments outside the framework of the Conference and they can inform us of the steps that they have taken in this respect so that we can take them into account in our negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

On behalf of the delegation of Egypt, I would like to express regret that we have not as yet been able to adopt a programme of work for the CD in accordance with the rules of procedure, that we have chosen a single topic which, although important, does not enjoy the top priority accorded to nuclear disarmament, and that we have chosen to start the work of the CD by dealing with this issue. Although we will be cooperating with the Special Coordinator on this subject, it should be borne in mind that the outcome of the work of the Special Coordinator will be fruitless unless we agree on a work programme for the CD. Our approval is therefore conditional on the adoption of a comprehensive programme of work for the CD. The delegation of Egypt has proposed, and the Group of 21 has adopted, a programme of work for the CD and we stand ready to negotiate thereon in order to establish a programme which is acceptable to all. In our opinion, the questions of nuclear disarmament, the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and security guarantees for non-nuclear States should be accorded priority. Outer space and other topics are issues on which special coordinators could be appointed. I wish to re-emphasize the need to improve the methods of work of the CD. I would like to suggest that, in my opinion, it is necessary to agree on the appointment of a special coordinator on this subject so that we can start immediately to consider and determine how best to ensure an improvement in the methods of work of the CD.

Now that we have agreed on the appointment of a special coordinator, it is very important that we should decide who is to undertake that task. In this connection, I would like to endorse what was said by the Ambassador of China in his statement concerning anti-personnel landmines. Our main concern is that the Special Coordinator should take into account the need to eliminate old and abandoned mines, particularly the landmines which were planted by countries during their occupation of the territories of others, and here I would like to refer to the case of Egypt in particular and to the landmines which were planted and abandoned in the territory of Egypt by foreign countries during the Second World War and the wars which took place in the Middle East. We have to give top priority to this because the ban on future production will not eliminate the danger to mankind, including the hazards to which individuals and development endeavours are exposed in Egypt and in similar cases elsewhere. In Egypt, we have about 23 million old abandoned mines. Therefore, we have to give top priority to this subject. Secondly, there is the question of defence obligations and the right of joint defence of the extensive borders which pass through uninhabited areas. It is inconceivable that we should disregard the security concerns of countries and their legitimate right of self-defence. Therefore, in our opinion these two topics should be accorded priority. I wish to stress this here and now before the Special Coordinator begins his work in this regard.

Finally, on behalf of the delegation of Egypt, I wish to endorse the statement made by Ambassador Celso Lafer of Brazil in which he expressed his country's intention to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.' This is a very important step not only towards non-proliferation but also towards global nuclear disarmament. We hope to be able to ensure the universality of this treaty in order to finally eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth and ensure full and honest implementation in good faith, as soon as possible, of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement. Mr. Ambassador, I would like to assure you that I listened to you with the greatest attention. I wish to stress once again that I will spare no effort to be able to adopt the programme of work. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. BUCH (Norway): Madam President, since this is the first time Norway takes the floor under your presidency, let me, like others, congratulate you upon your assumption of this important task. We are looking forward to constructive cooperation under your presidency.

Please allow me to make a few comments regarding the Norwegian position with respect to the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs. Our willingness to accept the appointment of a special coordinator, as stated in CD/1465, is based on the following understanding. The consultations undertaken by the Special Coordinator shall be an open and initial process where the purpose is to get the views of the member States on the question of dealing with APLs in the CD, including what kind of mandate and organizational arrangements could be possible. An agreement to appoint a special coordinator is only an agreement to further explore how APLs might be treated in the CD, without any prejudice to the final outcome. Finally, a firm decision on how or whether the APL issue will be dealt with in the CD will be taken in accordance with the CD's rules of procedure.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Norway for his statement. On my list of speakers I have the representatives of India, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Cuba and Mexico. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Ghose.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Madam President, since this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, may I assure you of the cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to get the CD working? I would also like to add my voice to those speakers who have bid farewell to our four parting colleagues and friends. We shall miss them. I must say that in a sense, perhaps, I even envy them the fact that they are going to places which are perhaps on paths slightly easier to tread.

The reason I take the floor today, after the adoption of the decision to appoint a Special Coordinator on landmines, is not to discuss that decision. As we have stated earlier, we have no problem with the decision as it stood, even when it was first proposed by a predecessor of yours. But the reason I take the floor is to draw attention to the chapeau of document CD/1465. The chapeau of CD/1465 talks about "urgent ongoing efforts to establish a programme of work for its 1997 session". We are not aware of any urgent ongoing efforts on the programme of work. We are aware, of course, that there are at least four proposals for a programme of work, from the beginning of this year. There was an Iranian proposal. There was a Canadian proposal. There has been a proposal by the G-21, and I believe, informally, one of your predecessors also tried to work on the programme of work. Of course, we have your assurance that this will be attended to, presumably inter-sessionally in between ECOSOC and the Biological Weapons Convention negotiations, and come out with a consensus when we start our work at the end of July.

However, let me try and say what really bothers me. What bothers me is some of the comments which have been made this morning. I would like to make very clear what our stand is on the issue of consensus in the CD. In our view, consensus in the CD is there to protect the weak, not to ignore the weak. Unfortunately, we seem to find that there are occasions where consensus, when it does not suit a majority - and the use of the word "majority" already brings in the idea that this is a voting procedure, a hidden voting procedure - when a country, even if it is one single country, has a particular problem, that problem needs to be addressed and respected. I do not think any country which holds matters up - even on a procedural issue or one which may seem procedural to some of us - takes that action lightly.

That country does it in its national interest, and we need, as a group of responsible States, to address what those problems are. I am deeply troubled by this particular trend in the CD and what it augurs for the future of our work.

We are getting used, as a member of the G-21, to being ignored. We put our priorities forward, and they are dismissed as rhetoric. We tried this, and this is not new. On 14 March last year we had called for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We had called for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in 1994, and we have been asking for it ever since, and it is a priority issue. Yes, we respect that there are countries which have problems. We would like to address those problems. If we get a straight "no", there is no way we can even address those problems. But there is something to the point of view which a large number of countries have put forward. We tabled in this session our proposal for a programme of work in document CD/1462. I am not aware of a single comment, except in passing, on one or two of the issues. Of course, as I said, we have your assurance that you will consult with us on the programme of work. We also have, and I am glad to draw particular attention to, document CD/1463, where we, India, together with several other countries of the G-21, have put forward a proposal for a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. None of these is thought to be important enough. It is true, we are not terribly important. We are the smaller, weaker countries. But for as long as we participate in the CD, we expect to participate as equals. We expect that our priorities will be given consideration and a response, and I think that the reason I take the floor today is that we do not believe that the appointment of a Special Coordinator on landmines has by any means solved any of the problems which genuinely exist. We heard an extremely good statement this morning by Ambassador Sha of China. We heard very good statements earlier on the same issue. This seems to be for the record. They are not taken on board. Maybe a Special Coordinator will solve it, maybe. We have no problem with a Special Coordinator or whatever is being done. But if we are going to be serious, I really feel that if we, as a country, are to continue to be involved in, to be interested in, what happens in the CD, then our priorities and our interests also need to be addressed. They cannot just be wished away, and we cannot just be told that only what "we think is right for you" will be negotiated here, whatever is ready for negotiation. I think that the reason I take the floor is because I am troubled, it is because I am very concerned. I am very concerned that one of our members had to absent himself today in order to see that the CD can take a decision. I hope that this is not a precedent and that one day I will not be called upon also, by circumstance, to absent myself to enable the CD to take a decision. I do not think this is the way in which peace and security are best guarded, unless you have the voluntary agreement of all countries participating in the CD to a particular decision of the CD. Such a decision, in my view, has very little value.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (New Zealand): Since I have already spoken today, I shall be brief. New Zealand was pleased to be able to join in adopting the decision to appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of APLs under agenda item 6. This decision, in our view, will allow for a much fuller exploration of all countries' positions than has been possible to date. We look forward to participating in the consultations of the Special Coordinator when appointed. Our commitment to achieving, as soon as possible, a total ban on landmines is reflected in our full engagement in the Ottawa Process. We accept that there is a potential for the CD to contribute to this urgent goal. We would also be pleased to see negotiations in the CD proceed in parallel with the Ottawa Process, provided there is a political willingness here to reach an early agreement on a strong mandate supportive of an early and comprehensive outcome. The step we have taken today will provide the means to find out whether or not there is such a political will in this body. We look forward to the Special Coordinator's early report, which should focus on the question of whether or not the Conference on Disarmament is able to reach consensus on a negotiating mandate supportive of an early and comprehensive outcome banning landmines. In the absence of such a consensus, New Zealand would not regard the Conference as being seized of the issue of landmines.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): Madam President, you deserve the thanks and congratulations of the Conference on Disarmament for bringing the discussion on landmines to a conclusion today with the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1465. In a statement made by my delegation some months ago in this forum, Sri Lanka clearly stated that it did not consider that landmines was a priority item for the CD. However, we said we had no objections to this issue's being taken up by the Conference. So far as the decision in CD/1465 is concerned, the understanding of my delegation is that the Special Coordinator will seek the views of members on the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6.

Now, with regard to the *chapeau* of this proposal - I think the reference was made by the distinguished Ambassador of India - particularly in relation to "urgent ongoing efforts", I would like to address this particular aspect. There is reference in this *chapeau* to "urgent ongoing efforts", and to the need "to set up mechanisms" and I hope that in the time available to us you will be able to resolve this matter as well. In this regard, I would like to mention the proposals contained in document CD/1462. In that proposal, the Group of 21 referred to several areas. First, there were proposals to establish three ad hoc committees: on nuclear disarmament, on outer space and on negative security assurances. There were also three other proposals with regard to the appointment of special coordinators on landmines, TIA and expansion of membership. Happily, the issue of landmines is now behind us, and we have several other issues to be considered. I consider that the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany is important in that he made a reference to the ability of the Western Group - I believe this sentiment is shared by the majority of us - and I will quote: he said, "ad hoc committees could be set up immediately" - I repeat the word "immediately" - "on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments". He was referring to at least three different areas. Now, taking this readiness on the part of some delegations to establish certain ad hoc committees immediately, perhaps before this formal session comes to an end, you could ask the Conference whether - I will use that particular order that was referred to in the statement of the Ambassador of Germany - whether the CD is in a position to set up ad hoc committees immediately on negative security assurances, on outer space and transparency in armaments. Then I come down to other proposals which are not included in that statement but referred to in the proposal of the Group of 21 on nuclear disarmament. We have another proposal for the appointment of the special coordinator on expansion. You may wish to ask the Conference whether there is any objection to establishing these ad hoc committees and appointing these special coordinators, and if there is not agreement to, for example, establish one ad hoc committee on NSA or outer space. We can take a quick decision. If there is disagreement on the subject of TIA or nuclear disarmament, we can postpone that decision for further consultations at an informal meeting, and I am certain that nobody would be opposed to the appointment of a special coordinator on expansion as well. By doing this, we will be in a position to separate the items on which we can take a quick decision at this meeting itself, and defer decisions on other issues to an informal meeting during which we can have a discussion and reach an agreement as to how we will tackle those problems. By electing this type of a procedure, I believe the CD will at least be able to solve the issues relating to the programme of work, in part, during the second part of the 1997 session.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): We have a similar concern and the same feeling of dissatisfaction as that expressed by the distinguished Ambassador of India, and for the same reasons which she put forward. We have adopted this decision to appoint a special coordinator on mines, but my delegation considers that we must immediately address and reach agreement on a programme of work. The decision adopted is selective and stands apart from the priority objectives of the Conference on Disarmament. There are proposals as to how our work should continue and my delegation, with the greatest respect, considers that you must urgently begin consultations on that subject, Madam, it being understood, as you yourself indicated, that we have accepted this decision, and I wish this to be noted in the records of this meeting.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): It was my intention to make a brief statement, but the representatives of Norway and New Zealand anticipated me. In fact I have little to add to what they said. The decision that we adopted today to appoint a special coordinator on mines to hold consultations on a possible mandate does not mean for my delegation that the Conference has decided to negotiate on the topic of mines.

I feel a certain sadness today at the departure of such eminent and such able friends. I listened very carefully to what was said by the Ambassadors who are leaving us, and the least I can do is to make it clear to them how much we shall miss them. They have left us messages which deserve study and deep reflection. I would not like the words which follow to be interpreted as a frivolous attempt to react on the run to reflections which they had spent time formulating, but I would like to stress that both Ambassador Kurokochi and Ambassador Berguño raised very interesting points concerning the rules of procedure. I agree with Ambassador Kurokochi, that vetoes should not be exercised on questions of procedure. If I recall correctly, it was in 1982 that the Group of 21 made a specific proposal for amendment of the rules of procedure for precisely this purpose, so that there would be no need for consensus for questions of procedure. I would like the secretariat to reissue for information that proposal put forward by the Group of 21 in 1982. If the Group of 21 had been heeded, we would not be having the problems we have had this year. At the beginning of the year we would have established an ad hoc committee for nuclear disarmament, which, as we all know is the priority for the international community, and of course our priority. So that we cannot but fully agree with the remarks made by Ambassador Kurokochi and Ambassador Berguño. I was very struck by the first part of the statement made by our distinguished friend, Ambassador Dembinski, who gave what I thought was a very meticulous and well thought-out diagnosis of our difficulties, the reasons why we are operating as we are, which call for serious consideration. As to the conclusions, my distinguished friend knows of course that we do not share the same ideas. We believe that despite the change in the backdrop, and despite the very positive change in international relations, there are priorities that last. One of these is to rid ourselves of weapons that jeopardize the future of the human race.

Of course Ambassador Sha, with his customary skill, gave us a lesson on anti-personnel landmines and I agree with practically everything he said. There is one thing I do not agree with. Ambassador Sha said repeatedly that anti-personnel landmines are a purely defensive weapon. No, Madam, anti-personnel landmines, like any mines, are a principally defensive weapon, but today they are not defensive weapons in the way that they are used. They are used in their millions, dropped from the air, launched with artillery for purposes of harassment and interdiction. This is a weapon which has become a weapon of terror, aimed at civilians, and it is used massively in order to attack. This is not a new phenomenon. As early as 1976, at the Conference of Experts convened by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Lugano, when the first proposals were made to prohibit or limit the use of mines in general, not only anti-personnel landmines, there was a French/English/Dutch document on the prohibition of certain uses, when the use of anti-personnel mines was permitted in populated areas, in towns. When we asked why, we were told it was for the very purposes of harassment and interdiction. It was a military necessity. When it was pointed out to them that the use of that weapon in cities would run counter to the rules of international humanitarian law on attacks, they replied that this was not an attack because these were defensive weapons. When we asked them how, with a defensive weapon, you can harass and interdict, we did not get any answer. That was in 1976 before any helicopter had the ability to drop 15,000 anti-personnel landmines during one flight. Such a quantity of mines dropped in one go constitutes not a defensive weapon, but an offensive weapon. But I agree with Ambassador Sha - we have to eliminate for humanitarian reasons the use of anti-personnel landmines that have indiscriminate effects. We must secure a total ban, and in this regard allow me to read out to you the report I just received this morning from my Counsellor Gómez Robledo, who is in Brussels. He says: "Mr. Ambassador, I have pleasure in informing you that participation in

Brussels has exceeded the most optimistic expectations: 161 States are represented, only 30 as observers; 131 States will sign the declaration that commits them to the abolition of mines this year. More than 1,000 non-governmental organizations are also attending." My Government is represented in Brussels.

Lastly, with regard to the decision we have adopted today, we also understand that we have adopted it to facilitate efforts which, as the representative of India states, should be under way with regard to the priorities in a programme of work. We should - and we thank you for your assurances, Madam - draw up a programme of work that will clearly reflect the priorities of the international community.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): May I add my voice to those of others in bidding a respectful *adieu* to our distinguished colleagues on taking leave of our Conference and thank them for their words of wisdom, which we will study and perhaps draw much advice from in the days to come? As noted by our distinguished Brazilian colleague, Ambassador Lafer, the United States has already welcomed Brazil's step to submit the NPT for ratification.

The main reason I have asked for the floor at this point in our meeting is to address the decision we have just taken on document CD/1465. My delegation and my Government welcome the decision taken today to appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6, and in taking this decision, it is the view of my delegation that the CD has taken an important step towards elaborating upon the contribution it should make in the worldwide efforts to stem the catastrophic consequences of anti-personnel landmines for civilian populations. We look forward to the immediate appointment of an individual to fulfil this function and the early report enabling another CD decision, hopefully in the near future, to establish an ad hoc committee to pursue appropriate negotiations on anti-personnel landmines in the Conference on Disarmament.

The United States' views on anti-personnel landmines and the CD role were set out in both Acting Director Holum's speech on 15 May and by myself at the Tuesday plenary, and I will not repeat them at this point in time. There is, however, the hope of my delegation that a broad framework for anti-personnel landmine negotiations in the CD can be agreed, providing for a flexible and comprehensive approach. In my view, the proposal contained in document CD/1455, proposed by the Japanese and Hungarian delegations, could offer such a framework.

In concluding my remarks this morning, I would like to note that my delegation has listened carefully to the comments of the distinguished representatives who have spoken before me. We also, with respect to the chapeau of CD/1465, hope that the decision we have taken this morning will just be the first of a series of decisions that will enable us to get down to serious and productive work as soon as possible, and we look forward to working with you and others in the Conference to be in a situation to take such decisions.

Mr. TAUWHARE (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Madam President, may I join others in expressing our congratulations to you for assuming the important position of presidency and assure you of our full support for your efforts? Could I also add my appreciation to previous speakers for the efforts of your predecessors which have contributed to the step forward which the Conference has succeeded in taking today?

I warmly welcome the decision just taken by the Conference to appoint a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. Several speakers today have called attention to the outstanding and urgent need to agree on the programme of work. We fully share those concerns, but we regard this decision to appoint a Special Coordinator as a means to help us achieve that end, rather than an end in itself. I believe that the chapeau of the decision itself makes this quite clear. This delegation remains fully committed to working in good faith to reach agreement on the programme of work, but as we have repeatedly made clear, we believe that such a programme should include negotiations on anti-personnel landmines. I know that there are some here who question whether the CD should discuss this issue. The United Kingdom, however, believes that it should and that the decision we have taken is therefore the right one and an important one. In my Ambassador's statement on 22 May, he made clear that the United Kingdom is committed to the aim of achieving a comprehensive ban on the transfer, manufacture, stockpiling and use of landmines, and that we will participate constructively in the Ottawa Process to this end. We regret that not all States, including several States represented here, have been able to make a similar commitment. It is specifically with the aim of drawing in these States, in the interests of securing a wider ban, that we support work on this issue in the CD. On the other hand, we regret that not all States who are ready to commit themselves to a total ban are ready to pursue work here. The crisis affecting mine-infested countries is continuing as we debate. Lives are being lost and livelihoods ruined. We have a responsibility to act whenever and wherever we can. We believe that work in the CD and in the Ottawa Process should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. For that reason, we welcome, as I say, the decision we have just taken. We want to see an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines established urgently. With that objective in mind, we look forward to working constructively with the Special Coordinator and urge all other delegations to do likewise. The time remaining for the work of the Special Coordinator is regrettably short. We firmly hope, therefore, that he can be appointed today to enable him to begin consultations during the inter-sessional period and to present the Conference with an early report in August. I would therefore recommend that you adjourn this session, that you hold immediately informal consultations on the nomination of a suitable candidate, and reconvene, if possible this afternoon, to decide on his appointment.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. I have four more speakers on my list. In view of the time I propose to suspend the plenary and then to hold Presidential consultations at 2.45 p.m. Then we shall hold an informal meeting, after which we will resume the plenary.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The 770th plenary meeting is resumed. I shall first of all give the floor to those speakers who have been on my list since this morning. We will then take a decision on Georgia's request to participate in our work as an observer. Then we will take a decision on the candidature for the post of Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. Lastly, we will consider the proposal made this morning by the representative of Sri Lanka on the Conference's programme of work. The first speaker on my list is the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): I would like to express the satisfaction of my delegation at the positive decision which we have just taken to appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6. At the same time, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, for this important achievement at the beginning of your presidency of the Conference. I am sure it augurs well for your further efforts to serve our common cause.

Finland has, with many other countries, tried to work actively in order to see to it that this Conference could play its legitimate role in dealing with this challenging issue and starting a consultative negotiating process on a total ban of anti-personnel landmines. We consider today's decision most timely. We are convinced that all delegations will now be ready to make constructive contributions in assisting the Coordinator to prepare the report to the Conference, and we would naturally be very happy to be in a position to congratulate the Coordinator in person, as soon as possible.

In this context, I am very pleased that our esteemed colleagues, Ambassadors Kurokochi, Dembinski, Berguño and Armstrong, with whom I have had the privilege of working closely, had the chance to witness this concrete result before they leave Geneva. Their contributions, also today, have been most welcome, and I am convinced that they will be assisting us in our future deliberations.

I listened with particular interest to the statement made by our Chinese colleague, Ambassador Sha. We appreciate the clearly announced readiness of his delegation to join others in exploring this issue in the CD. We hope that the decision taken today, as many delegations have already said before me, will pave the way for further constructive decisions so that the potential of the Conference can be more effectively realized.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I wish to associate myself with the terms of the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Finland, that is to say, to welcome the fact that a positive decision has been taken and that at least this is one decision along the path to implementing the programme of work, in other words in the application of the agenda of our Conference. Also to say we hope that the Coordinator will not only be appointed but will start his or her work as promptly as possible, and to support the proposal made by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka so that we can make progress on the specific items on which there is consensus, and those which he identified are fully endorsed by my delegation. My delegation, as you know, Madam, is a party to the Group of 21 document. That paper identifies a set of tasks which we call the programme of work. These tasks are the ways in which the various items should be approached and we are prepared, open-minded, not as the Group of 21 but as the delegation of Chile, to examine each of these points promptly with the intention, or the illusion, that a decision can be adopted in this regard at this very plenary meeting.

Mr. KREID (Austria): I am particularly pleased that it was under your chairmanship, Madam, that we were able to move forward in our deliberations. It remains to be seen how decisive this move is, but we wish you luck and pledge our support. Some of the colleagues who have announced that they are leaving us have, in their final remarks, given us sound and poignant advice and I think, as far as we are concerned, that we consider this an important legacy to be examined and evaluated for our future work.

We do not want the CD to be occupied with one single subject only, and we are among those delegations here in the room who would hope and who would support that we expand our programme of work, that we agree on the nomination of special coordinators or the setting up of ad hoc committees along the lines of declarations and of proposals which have already been made.

As far as our position of this morning to have a coordinator on anti-personnel landmines is concerned, I would want to say the following: our delegation is ready to embark, together with the other member countries here, on a process of identifying what contribution to the cause, which is a common, shared global cause, the CD can usefully make, without however endangering the process known under the name of Ottawa. While we fully appreciate the statement made earlier by Ambassador Sha, and while we share much of what he has said, we fail to see how the Ottawa Process could have a negative impact on what he calls the authority of the CD as a negotiating body, since the Ottawa Process, in our mind, owes its very existence to the fact that the CD has failed to exercise authority in a timely manner in this area. I believe that what the Chinese remarks suggest to us is simply that there are certain limitations here in the CD, and these limitations will now have to be considered very carefully in discussing a possible mandate for negotiations.

Mr. AFZAL (Pakistan): As this is the first occasion for my delegation to take the floor under your presidency, Madam, I would like to take the opportunity to express our happiness in seeing you preside over the work of the Conference on Disarmament at this important juncture. I also wish to express our great appreciation for the diligent efforts made by your predecessors, particularly Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Diallo of Senegal. These efforts and the energetic endeavours you have made over the past few days have resulted in the welcome decision taken by the Conference this morning to appoint a special coordinator on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. We look forward to the designation of the Special Coordinator, and we will work closely with him towards agreement on the direction and the substance of work that the CD can undertake on the APL issue.

Pakistan indeed was the first to propose, in the Conference on 30 January this year, that the appointment of a special coordinator was the most appropriate way in which we could conduct the consultations on this issue. Ambassador Sha of the People's Republic of China has very eloquently expressed his views on various aspects of the issues involved in APLs. We appreciate his statement, which places in front of us a lot of substance to talk about. We, on our part, share views expressed by him and we are looking forward to discussing them during consultations with the Special Coordinator.

At this time, we consider it necessary to reiterate that the Conference must continue to award the highest priority to the creation of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as proposed by the Group of 21 on several occasions. The draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament has been proposed by 26 delegations of the Group of 21 in document CD/1463. I trust that you will soon convene consultations to consider the establishment of the ad hoc committee on this subject and its draft mandate. The Group of 21 has also proposed in document CD/1462, dated 5 June of this year, that two other ad hoc committees should also be established on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Since mandates for these proposed committees are already available and agreed previously by the Conference, we hope that their establishment will take place very soon and will not be linked with other issues. Pakistan also suggests consideration of the proposal of the Group of 21 for the appointment of a special coordinator on transparency in armaments, as well as special coordinators on the questions of the expansion of the CD and the improved and effective functioning of the CD.

Pakistan shares the sense of frustration of many members of the Group of 21 that so far there has not been a constructive response to the Group's proposals on a programme of work, contained in document CD/1462. My delegation believes that since there is no substantive objection to almost all the proposals that have been put forward in this document, you will find it possible to convene early consultations on these proposals, with a view to adopting appropriate decisions at the outset of the CD's resumed session next month.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Mr. Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): The French delegation extends to you its best wishes for success, Madam President. We are particularly pleased to see in the Chair the representative of Slovakia, a friendly country with which we have close ties. We are particularly pleased also, and this is quite a rare event, to see two French-speaking Presidents following one after the other in the Chair.

France was the first country here this year to propose the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate on the subject of anti-personnel landmines. Today's decision is a step in that direction; we are waiting for he next steps.

France is taking part actively in all international efforts which can lead to a total ban on anti-personnel mines worldwide, and as far as we are concerned a total ban relates to the production, use, stockpiling and export of anti-personnel mines. To this end we confirmed yesterday in the Brussels conference that we would take part in the conference which will open in Oslo in September in order to conclude if possible, before the end of the year in Ottawa, a Convention prohibiting the production, use, stockpiling and export f anti-personnel landmines. In parallel we will continue to work as hard as we possibly can for the opening of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, in order to identify solutions which are genuinely verifiable and universal. The Conference on Disarmament is the appropriate forum to embark on negotiations including the States which produce and use anti-personnel mines and which may be expected not to be able to join in the negotiations in Oslo and later the Ottawa convention itself. Finally, France, jointly with its European Union partners, *inter alia*, calls on all States to ratify as of now Protocol II to the 1980 Convention, which regulates the use of anti-personnel mines, as amended in May 1996. This text is the sole international legal instrument which currently limits the use, and in particular what is called the indiscriminate use, of this type of weapon. It is therefore very important that it should be implemented by as many States as possible pending the adoption of stricter instruments, and pending accession to the latter by the countries most concerned.

On the national level, France has renounced the production and export of anti-personnel mines once and for all, it has embarked on the destruction of its stockpiles, and we hope that these measures will have made a modest contribution to mobilizing the international community as regards the use of anti-personnel mines. France is ready to renounce them totally as soon as an effective treaty enters into force, and at the very latest at the end of 1999. In the interim, France will continue to apply the rule laid down by the Council of Ministers on 2 October 1996 renouncing use except in cases of absolute necessity relating to force security.

Yesterday the Senate adopted an act ratifying Protocol II to the 1980 Convention. The text will be submitted to the National Assembly in the near future. Ratification of Protocol II is therefore under way as far as we are oncerned, and the Minister for European Affairs, who submitted the bill for ratification in the upper chamber, took the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment, both within the Conference on Disarmament and in what is now called the Ottawa Process, in favour of the greatest support for Protocol II to the 1980 Convention.

Madam President, having addressed the question of mines, my delegation would like to assure you of its full support for the urgent efforts which are now incumbent on you in order to breathe life into the *chapeau* of the decision we have adopted today, and for the efforts on which you are currently embarking to ensure that the Conference draws up a programme of work for this session and sets up appropriate machinery for the other items on the agenda of the Conference. We are ready to discuss the proposals on the table, and particularly the proposal put forward this very morning by Sri Lanka. We may need to continue this discussion beyond this evening, but we wish to embark on it seriously and to reiterate our full support for your efforts on this matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of France for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I have no further speakers on my list. Do other delegations wish to take the floor at this juncture? I recognize the representative of China. You have the floor.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): During this morning's plenary the Chinese delegation made a statement on the subject of APLs. With regard to that statement some expressed their support. Others expressed different views with regard to a certain part of that statement. As far as my delegation is concerned, that is nothing but normal, because in the very first paragraph of my delegation's statement we made it very clear that there are different views on the APL issue. In the last paragraph of my statement I once again mentioned that on the issue of APLs there are different views. Therefore it can be said that the Chinese delegation is by no means surprised by the comments we have heard. It is precisely because we have different views that there is a need to appoint a special coordinator to seek the views of all parties. It is precisely because there are differences between us that there is a need to conduct discussions, including the possible future negotiations. If at the very beginning the views are all convergent, then there will be no need for meetings any more. Therefore, with regard to the views expressed by others, my delegation has full understanding. At the same time, my delegation is gratified that some delegations have attached such great importance to the statement by my delegation.

The second point I would like to make is that the members of my delegation are by no means military experts, and I especially am not. Therefore, if I am asked to make a distinction as to whether the landmine is a defensive or an offensive weapon, it will be difficult for me to do so. I would have to rely on my experts. They are all Chinese. The Chinese experts may not see eye to eye with other experts. As a layman, however, I am aware that even the landmines that are used during attack are still defensive in nature. They do not change their characteristics of being defensive. Therefore we can leave this topic for future discussion. I would hope as a layman I could be convinced by others.

Another point I would like to make is on the Ottawa Process. We certainly respect the sovereign decisions of those States participating in the Ottawa Process. I wish them good luck. In my statement I only expressed doubt that the Ottawa Process might have an effect on the role of the CD as the single multilateral negotiating body in the disarmament area. I only raised that point. Of course, if there is no negative effect whatsoever, my delegation would then be able to say "Long live the CD". As to whether my statement represents only a personal value judgement, indeed that is the case.

It is the value judgement of my delegation. It is 100 per cent true. Therefore I have no interest whatsoever in imposing that value judgement on others. Finally, I would like to congratulate ourselves on the decision we took this morning. I hope that with regard to the difference that exists among us we will have the opportunity to conduct full discussions.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China for his statement. Do other delegations wish to take the floor at this stage?

I now invite the Conference to take a decision on the request from Georgia to participate in the work of the Conference in 1997 as an observer. This request is before you under cover of a note from the President issued as document CD/WP.488. May I take it that the Conference approves this request?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The intensive consultations that I have conducted indicate that the candidature of Ambassador John Campbell of Australia is acceptable for the post of Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. May I consider that the Conference decides to appoint Ambassador Campbell to that position?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I would like to extend my warm congratulations to Ambassador Campbell and wish him every success in his difficult task. I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. HAND (Australia): Allow me to offer the congratulations of the Australian delegation to you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency. I should like to thank the Conference for the responsibility it has entrusted to Ambassador Campbell. I know he will be surprised when I pass on the news to him. He is currently in Brussels, participating in good faith in that process. I know I can say on his behalf that he will take up the appointment with the gravity and bipartisan quality that the subject and your interest warrant. The delegation looks forward to working closely with each of you in the coming period.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Australia for her statement. You will recall that this morning the Ambassador of Sri Lanka proposed that the Conference should decide to set up ad hoc committees on certain items on the agenda. May I ask the representative to be kind enough to repeat his proposal?

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): It appears to my delegation that 26 June is a very good day because we have been able to take two important decisions, one on CD/1465 and the other to appoint Ambassador Campbell as the Special Coordinator. I hope that, if we proceed in the same spirit and at the same speed, we will be able to achieve much more before we close this second part of the 1997 session of the CD.

In my intervention this morning, I briefly made reference to the chapeau of the draft decision contained in CD/1465, and also to the proposals contained in CD/1462, proposed by the Group of 21, in which there were several proposals for the establishment of three ad hoc committees and a number of special coordinators. I also made reference to the very interesting statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany, who very clearly stated that ad hoc committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments. This was the position of the Western Group, as stated in the plenary of last year's session. Now, that being the case - and some of these positions coincide with the proposals made by the members of the Group of 21 - I thought, taking into consideration the good mood we are in today, we will be able to go a little bit further and take additional decisions.

I do not want to start with the listing that is contained in the G-21 proposal (CD/1462), but rather with the list enumerated by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany, and according to that statement, the Western Group is able to support the establishment of ad hoc committees on negative security assurances, outer space, transparency in armaments. What I suggested was that we take that list in that particular order, and that you ask the Conference whether it is in a position to take a decision on the establishment of, first, an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances, secondly, an ad hoc committee on outer space, and thirdly, an ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments. Then I went back to the proposal of the G-21. From the point of view of the G-21, it is the most important subject, because in our statement we said that the Group of 21 continued to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. In view of that, I put that particular proposal, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as the fourth proposal. Then, we also have before us several proposals for appointing special coordinators. We have already taken a decision on the Coordinator for landmines, but there are several other proposals. One is for expansion, one is for the agenda, and the other one is for the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. So, you can ask the Conference in this particular order whether the Conference is in a position to take decisions on the establishment of the four ad hoc committees and the appointment of three special coordinators. If there is agreement, we can quickly establish the ad hoc committees or decide on the appointment of special coordinators, and perhaps even consider informally, or in whatever form you would like, who should take these responsibilities, and, if there are certain mechanisms on which we cannot reach a decision at this point in time in the plenary, perhaps we can put those issues aside and take them up in an informal meeting of the plenary so that we can also have a decision on those mechanisms as well.

In making this proposal, I also take into consideration what the distinguished Ambassador of Austria said a little while ago - that we cannot simply be satisfied with appointing a special coordinator on landmines and say that we have done a good job. We cannot go to the General Assembly and say that this is all we did for the year, and we cannot come back in 1998 and start the debate all over again and reach no conclusion. So it is a good thing, although we will not be in a position to do much work during the remaining period of the Conference, to go through this procedure. We will be able to establish the mechanisms and, to the extent possible, we can do some work. This is my proposal.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his proposal. We have all heard the proposal, and I would like to have your reactions. I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): We have heard the request made by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to put before the Conference on Disarmament for consideration the proposals that he himself put forward, in the order in which he put them forward. I think it has been clear in this Conference after discussions we have had in that regard that any delegation has the right to submit a proposal to the Conference, and has the right to expect the President to put it to the Conference for consideration. The Ambassador of Sri Lanka has requested that the establishment, and there are various proposals, first of all of an ad hoc committee for agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", should be put before the Conference for consideration. That would be the first thing to be put before the Conference. I request you, Madam, to put this first proposal before the Conference for its consideration, and if there is no objection, that it be so decided. Once that had been done, we would move on to the second proposal, and then the third, the fourth, and those that follow.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): I will speak in English because the text which I have before me is in English, and to avoid any misunderstanding by the interpreters. The decision which we have taken this morning reads in the chapeau, "without prejudice to, and within the context of, its urgent ongoing efforts to establish a programme of work for its 1997 session and to set up mechanisms, as appropriate, for other agenda items of the Conference", etc., so I think, having taken that decision, and also having taken a second decision to appoint a special coordinator, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, I am happy to see Ambassador Campbell as the Special Coordinator on this subject. I congratulate him and his delegation, and I assure him and the delegation of Australia of my full cooperation.

Having in mind the intervention of the delegation of Egypt in the plenary this morning, I think the most urgent thing which we are facing now is the implementation of the chapeau which we have agreed, that this is an urgent matter. We have on the table the proposal on the programme of work submitted by the Group of 21, and we have other proposals. I think that this is the urgent task which you as President, Madam, are facing, because you have to conduct consultations on that. I also have in mind the additional proposal made by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka. We are not again going to pick and choose. We have a programme of work in full in the Group of 21 paper. We also have other proposals and we have to take the programme of work as a package, and then we agree on the items which we will adopt in the programme of work, item by item - an ad hoc committee, for instance, on nuclear disarmament, an hoc committee on agenda item 3 - prevention of an arms race in outer space - and then on NSA, etc., etc., and also the question of special coordinators. I think that we have first of all to agree on a programme of work, and then after that, we establish the various ad hoc committees or appoint special coordinators to deal with the various issues. This is, I think, the way my delegation sees things, in conformity with the decision which we adopted a few hours ago on the appointment of a special coordinator to deal with the issue of APLs.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): I should like to apologize for taking the floor again today, but I promise to be brief. Firstly, I should like to welcome the adoption of the decision in CD/1465, as well as the agreement on a special coordinator. I should like to congratulate you, Madam, for having achieved the decision, as well as Ambassador Campbell, in whose abilities and work we have full trust. At the same time, I should like to underline the readiness of my delegation to follow up on the chapeau of document CD/1465 by identifying other issues on which the CD might engage on substantive work. I therefore feel that the initiative by the delegations of Sri Lanka and Egypt to take this up is justified. Where my delegation would differ, however, is on the need to adopt a package. I think we should now start to examine, item by item, to see where we can agree, and we would also propose that we include, on issues where we cannot agree immediately on setting up an ad hoc committee, to see whether we might have other special coordinators, such as on the effectiveness of our work, since a number of delegations have addressed this issue this morning. I would also recall that in my statement this morning, I pointed to the urgency of addressing the issue of fissile material cut-off negotiations. This issue could also be addressed, and my delegation is of course in your hands as to how we carry out these consultations. You might either contact delegations in informal consultations, or hold an open-ended consultation, but I think we have now come to the stage where we should engage in a broader consultation on how to carry our work forward in this Conference.

Mr. KREID (Austria): It seems to me that we now have two proposals. The first was explained to us by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka and I believe fully supported by the Ambassador of Mexico, namely, that we have a list of items and we are asked to go through it and to react to each of them as to whether the delegations here are ready to proceed with either the establishment of an ad hoc committee or the nomination of additional coordinators. Now I admit that this procedure certainly has some risks since it might turn out that the final result of this process will not be to everybody's complete satisfaction. However, the good, positive aspect is that we might end up with something in addition to what we have agreed this morning, and this, as we have stated earlier, in itself would be a step in the right direction. Needless to say, this list is not a complete list from our viewpoint. We would like to have added to it, as the German Ambassador indicated, the item of fissile material cut-off. However, I am now somewhat at a loss as to how to interpret the proposal or the statement made earlier by the Ambassador of Egypt, because he was really speaking about adopting a complete work programme and still, if I correctly understood it, after having done so, going through such a list item by item. I do not see how we can do both things at the same time. I would actually, in the interest of being able to get some work done, express my preference for the approach which was suggested by Sri Lanka and Mexico.

Mrs. ARIAS CASTAÑO (Colombia) (translated from Spanish): Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, Madam, allow me to congratulate you on taking up this post and on the success you have achieved in such a short time. I also wish to commend the Ambassador of Senegal for the excellent job she did in the Chair.

Colombia is among the countries which presented the programme of work contained in document CD/1462. We think that this programme of work would be ideal if it were adopted in full. However, in the light of events which have occurred today, since we have agreed to the appointment of a special coordinator for anti-personnel mines under agenda item 6, my delegation considers that the proposal made by the representative of Sri Lanka is a concrete and valid proposal which should be considered by the Conference. Therefore my delegation requests you, Madam, to put the questions one by one, whether the Conference is in a position to agree to the establishment of an ad hoc committee, firstly on negative assurances, secondly, on the arms race in outer space, thirdly on transparency in armaments, fourthly, on nuclear disarmament, and whether it is ready to appoint special coordinators, first for expansion, second on the agenda, and third on the functioning of this Conference. Once we have the reply, if this body agrees and we have consensus, various ad hoc committees can be set up and various special coordinators can be appointed. If not, we would embark on informal consultations and you could tell us what the best way would be to make progress on these issues. I request you to put the question directly on each of the points.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): I am prompted to ask for the floor in reaction to what the Ambassador of Austria said - that he is perplexed about the proposal which I made. My proposal is related to the implementation of the chapeau of the decision which we have taken today on the appointment of a special coordinator to deal with APLs. So we wanted to implement this chapeau. We have said "within the context of ... its urgent ongoing efforts to establish a programme of work for its 1997 session", so this is the first priority which we have to tackle. This is in line with the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament. I wanted to draw your attention to rules 28 and 29 of the Conference on Disarmament. Either we follow these rules or we throw them out. In rule 28 - I am going to read it - perhaps not everyone has the rules before him - "On the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its annual session, shall establish its programme of work, which will include a schedule of its activities for that session, taking also into account the recommendations, proposals and decisions referred to in rule 27", which relates to the agenda. We already provisionally adopted the agenda at the beginning of the session. And then, rule 29 says: "The provisional agenda and the programme of work shall be drawn up by the President of the Conference on Disarmament" - that is, you yourself, Madam - "with the assistance of the Secretary-General and presented to the Conference for consideration and adoption". This is why I think we have to establish a work programme according to the rules of procedure, and then we proceed according to rule 28, to establish the schedule of the activities of the Conference at that session. I have no misgivings about the proposal of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, but I think the first thing which we have again today, not yesterday, is to establish a work programme in line with rule 28 of the rules of procedure.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): It is true that there are different proposals, and it is also the case that there is a specific request made by a delegation, and in keeping with the practice which we have been following until very recently in Conference, a delegation can make a proposal and request that a decision be taken immediately. The arguments I have now heard from some delegations are different from what I heard when we had to take a decision with regard to mines. The topics awaiting a decision have been on the table as proposals in one form or anther for a long time, and everyone is familiar with them. So, Madam, please ask who is opposed to the establishment of these arrangements, as requested by the distinguished delegation of Sri Lanka. That is what we wished to say.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): I do not want to prolong this debate any further. I believe all members would agree with me that to prepare a package we should have items to put into the package. Once we agree on items X, Y and Z, taking into consideration the proposals before us, we will soon be able to package it and to do that, first we will have to see on which issues we have agreement and on which issues we need further discussion. To begin that process, I believe, what we will have to do is to ask, one by one, whether the Conference agrees to the re-establishment of NSA, re-establishment of outer space, re-establishment of TIA, establishment of nuclear disarmament and the appointment of special coordinators on (1) expansion; (2) agenda; (3) improved and effective functioning. So you have, actually speaking, seven questions to ask. I think, without wasting the time of the Conference, we can go quickly through this procedure, which will give us an understanding as to which issues require further discussions, formally or informally, or whatever it is.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I think that enough has been said about these issues, and in particular the last speakers, the Ambassador of Cuba and the representative of Colombia, were very clear. I think that the procedure that has been suggested is entirely, not just compatible but in conformity with the spirit and the meaning of the rules of procedure. When I spoke this morning I mentioned the fact that we had held a plenary meeting on Tuesday at your suggestion, Madam, in consultation with your predecessor. As the secretariat explained that decision, it referred to a decision by the Conference which established the framework for what we call the programme of work. The framework refers really to programming the activities of the Conference, and in that context it was suggested that the secretariat at the time should produce what might be called a simplified proposal. What does this refer to? This simply refers to the fact that, during a first stage, for example, general statements are heard, in a second stage the issues on the agenda are taken in a given order - that is the schedule mentioned there, and that is the programme of work, and nothing else. We, the Group of 21, have said in a document how we would like the programme of work to be applied. Obviously, not in the terms in which it ought to have been done since the beginning of the year, but as regards the specific content of each of the topics. So there is nothing that will exist substantively as a programme of work if we do not take decisions on each of these questions and it has rightly been said, and my delegation has strongly urged that, legitimately, the question should be asked and a reply and a decision obtained on the question of the coordinator on anti-personnel mines, and with the same vehemence, and just as rightly, and just as legitimately, I think that we can raise the question, on each of the topics we have already adopted as an agenda, what machinery is appropriate and what machinery this Conference is prepared to accept. The order in which it was formulated by Sri Lanka has been endorsed by delegations in various groups and in addition it is backed up by experience and awareness regarding these issues. Let us, then, proceed to consider them and I urgently and strongly agree that we should do so before the closure of our meeting.

Mr. AFZAL (Pakistan): My delegation is listening to the debate very carefully. The representative of Sri Lanka has made a very specific proposal. We believe that he crafted it very carefully. He has tried to keep in sequence, first the non-controversial issues, and he has requested that we should ask specific questions from this house on each one of them. In the meantime, we have heard proposals from other delegations which, needless to say, still are subject to controversy. We would ask you, Madam President, to take up first the proposal of Sri Lanka and ask those special questions from the house, and then take up the proposals by others. We hope that no effort will be made here to make linkages. We believe that there is a need for the improvement of the climate in this house. In the morning you have seen a sense of cooperation from all the delegations, and we hope that this sense of cooperation will be maintained.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Just to remind you, Madam President, that my delegation, in its statement this morning, had also pointed to the issue of "cut-off". I don't know whether this is covered. So if you should ask questions, we would be very grateful if this could be included as well.

Mr. RAO (India): We could go along with the suggestion of Sri Lanka regarding the method which you intend to follow. I would like to draw your attention to CD/1463 in which we, along with 25 other countries of the Group of 21, have proposed a specific mandate for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This is in conjunction with the proposal which was made by the Group of 21 in CD/1462, wherein it was mentioned that "a specific proposal on a mandate for the ad hoc committee will be presented", and this proposed mandate includes FMCT.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Madam President, our delegation is totally in your hands as to how we proceed now. We are prepared to take decisions point by point. We can take them starting from the middle out, inside out, upside down. It seems to us that all the proposals that are on the table should be part of the discussion, but we can start with the proposal made by Sri Lanka. It seems to me, however - and we are prepared to do this, we don't object - but at the same time it seems to me the discussion we have listened to in the last half-hour or 45 minutes indicates that (1) there is a willingness to take some decisions, (2) that perhaps there may be even some decisions we can take, and (3) that it might be useful to have an informal discussion of what those might be to pave the way for them, and that perhaps the consultations that others have been calling for for some time are now ripe to be held, and that perhaps we are on the verge of being able to take some decisions. Whether we proceed to take them now, or whether we discuss what it is and try to create the framework so that we will know what we are going to do, we are in your hands.

Mr. ZEMSKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): First of all, Madam President, allow me to congratulate you on taking up this honourable and responsible post and wish you every success in your already successful starting period. I would like to support and associate myself with what was just said by the distinguished representative of the United States. I think it is premature now to embark on a detailed survey of views in a formal plenary session insofar as the questions related to the individual items of the programme of work have practically not been discussed. So I think it would be useful and necessary to conduct detailed open-ended consultations in any format which you might decide on, Madam.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): My statement will be very short. One sentence: the Chinese delegation supports the request by the delegation from Sri Lanka.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China for his statement. On the one hand, we have a proposal from the delegation of Sri Lanka that we should take a decision, item by item, on the establishment of four ad hoc committees and three special coordinators; several delegations have supported this proposal. On the other hand, we have a proposal based on rule 28 of the rules of procedure that we should first adopt the programme of work and then establish ad hoc committees. There are other delegations which are asking for more consultations. I think the most sensible course would be to open informal consultations immediately and perhaps continue the plenary session tomorrow. I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): With all due respect, Madam, allow me to protest. I think that we are applying double standards, compared to what occurred in this Conference just three plenaries ago. Three plenaries ago - it is true that you were not in the Chair - it was demanded that the President put before the Conference a specific draft decision drawn up by several delegations and it was said that every delegation had the right to ask the Conference to take a position on a given proposal. Now, Madam, the rules of the game are being changed. There has been a specific proposal from the delegation of Sri Lanka. This specific proposal has been given broad backing, and they want to involve us in what was refused a fortnight ago, that is, informal consultations. Fifteen days ago, my delegation grew weary with asking for informal consultations, and they were denied me. The decision we took today on the appointment of a coordinator for the mines issue could have been taken three plenaries ago if we had had informal consultations, and I was denied them. I protest at this way of proceeding.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): May I remind you, Madam President, and the members of the Conference that I made this proposal in the morning plenary, and it was during that plenary these questions should have been put forward to the Conference? It was not done because we passed the time, 1 o'clock, and there was a proposal for a particular manner in which we should proceed in the afternoon. Secondly, the proposal of the Group of 21, although I was not making that particular proposal, has been before us since 5 June 1997, whereas the proposal which we adopted was put forward on 19 June. Thirdly, we have not only adopted the decision contained in CD/1465, but very speedily we have gone and taken a decision with regard to the Special Coordinator as well. Now my proposal was very simple, that is, to find out formally in the plenary whether there is agreement to the establishment of four ad hoc committees, and of course if the proposal of the distinguished Ambassador of Germany is to be taken, it can be taken later after my proposal is put forward. I have asked you to put forward questions with regard to four ad hoc committees and the appointment of three special rapporteurs. So I would like to ask you once again, before we conclude this plenary, to ask the Conference whether we are in a position to take a decision on these matters. If we are able to decide, it is well and good. Then we would have more than one decision adopted on 26 June. If we are unable to do so, we understand, because we operate on the basis of consensus, we can't force anybody, and we will engage in consultations which you could not do for a variety of reasons in the past, and decide on what exactly can be done with regard to the issues that are before us. So I ask you once again, please put the questions to the Conference and we will find out what exactly the position of the Conference is on the establishment of the four ad hoc committees and three special coordinators, and after that we can take the issue put forward by the distinguished Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Madam, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka has broadly made the same point as the one I wanted to make, namely that it would seem to me normal for us to reply first of all to the questions from Sri Lanka and then to the question on the "cut-off" posed by Germany, by virtue of the principle of equality of treatment to which France is attached among the States of this Conference. I think it is obvious there is agreement in the room that we should answer the Ambassador of Sri Lanka's questions during this plenary session. As to whether it is useful to suspend the meeting and resume it tomorrow, as to whether we should answer this evening or tomorrow morning - my delegation is ready to answer this evening, it is ready to answer tomorrow morning. However - and this is perhaps the only point which I want to make to defend the idea which you put forward - it is possible to have a night to raise the question with our capitals, allowing the national positions of certain countries to evolve so as to reflect the positive developments which have occurred today, because obviously on the proposal of Sri Lanka, we are ready to respond, and indeed there are a number of points which we are ready to accept, but quite clearly also the instructions which certain countries have here are instructions which were mostly given before the decision on the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines was taken. That is the only point I wished to raise.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): This morning, in my statement, I referred to the proposal of the Western Group of last year, which referred explicitly to ad hoc committees to be set up on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments, plus the three special coordinators, and I also referred to the issue of a fissile cut-off treaty. If my understanding is correct, the delegation of Sri Lanka expressly referred to this statement and to the proposal contained therein, so the question is whether we should not look first at this proposal, because in this afternoon's statement I think the proposal by Sri Lanka was somewhat changed or enlarged, and so I would like to have clarification on how we should proceed. Of course, we are ready to decide now, or tomorrow, either in plenary or informal consultations.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): I decided to take the floor again because we wanted to voice a few thoughts in relation to this new situation in which we find ourselves. I am trying to refer to the situation which, a short time ago, and with similar situations, we had to cope with. When we asked for more consultations on the mines issue, we were told that we had already had sufficient time to consider it. When my delegation, together with other delegations, said there were other proposals, we were told that no linkages would be established. Today there has been a decision on mines, and therefore there's no linkage. Why not proceed? What is happening now? When we asked for informal consultations, and Syria did so a very short time ago, he got silence for an answer. So why this double standard? Either the rules are applied to all or they're not applied at all. Are we going to operate with a double standard? We endorse the protest voiced by the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico, and with all due respect, we insist that the President should put the question that in our view she should put.

Mr. SABOIA (Brazil): I take the floor to express the view of Brazil on this issue, and I would like to say that my delegation supports putting the proposal of Sri Lanka to the decision of the Conference. We have heard many views in this respect, many have supported it, and I think the proposal is very simple and is in accordance with the rules of procedure. We have, in fact, to be consistent in the application of the rules of procedure of this Conference, and it has been indicated on a very recent occasion, it was established that a delegation has the right to ask the Conference to have a decision put for its consideration as soon as it is made. Therefore, my delegation also supports that way of proceeding.

Mr. LAMDAN (Israel): Madam President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you and let me also add my voice of felicitation for the extraordinary success which you have managed to achieve in the first few days of your presidency. We for our part recognize the constructive approach being offered by the delegation of Sri Lanka, but at the same time we find ourselves inclined to agree with the proposals being made by certain delegations that the time is perhaps ripe for further consultations before we rush headlong into decisions and perhaps get carried away with ourselves. In any event, I at least must say in all frankness, we, Israel, are not in a position to express positions on the questions if they are put this evening because we do not have instructions, and hence I must associate myself with the proposal being made by the representative of France that at least we have the grace of one night to seek instructions and clarification.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. TAUWHARE (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Could I just seek clarification on one point in the proposal by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka? If questions are to be asked on establishing ad hoc committees on these various subjects, what mandate for each of these ad hoc committees would be involved? There are obviously mandates that date back to the time when these committees last met. Are we talking about those mandates, or are we talking about some new mandate which is yet to be negotiated?

Mrs. TINCOPA (Peru) (translated from Spanish): In view of the fact that time presses, I will leave my compliments and thanks for another occasion, Madam President. Very briefly, we wish to offer the support of my delegation for the proposal made by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, and to request you to consult the Conference on this proposal. We are making this request with the sole aim of seeking progress on the issues on which there is consensus in this Conference.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Very briefly so that things are perfectly clear. We are prepared to discuss and take a position on the decisions put to us this evening, and we are not asking for deferral until tomorrow. We leave it to the Conference and its members to gauge whether it is appropriate or not to postpone matters to tomorrow, but in saying this we would not wish in any way to give credence to the idea that there are double standards. If a single State wants the decision to be taken today, we are ready.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): This is in reply to the question posed by the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom. The Ad Hoc Committees on Negative Security Assurances, Outer Space and Transparency in Armaments are no new subjects to us. We have had these Ad Hoc Committees before, and when the decision is taken with regard to the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committees, I am sure various delegations will explain their positions on the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committees and, if necessary, on the mandate as well. With regard to the proposed ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, I would merely like to refer to the proposed mandate contained in CD/1463.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his statement. In view of the fact that the interpreters are available only until 6.15 p.m., and that I still have speakers on the list, I do not wish to create a situation of double standards, and so I recommend and propose - I would like to have your views on this - that we suspend this plenary and we resume it tomorrow. I give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, is it your proposal that we suspend this meeting and resume it specifically with the questions that the delegation of Sri Lanka asked to be put to the Conference?

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Yes, that is my intention. I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. TAUWHARE (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I am sorry to come back again. I was grateful to the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his response to my question. I am afraid I am still not entirely clear. If we are to have the evening to seek instructions on the question, it would be helpful to be able to inform our capitals of what the questions are that are to be put to us tomorrow. That will, I assume, not just simply be to establish an ad hoc committee on such and such a subject, but would also spell out exactly what mandate the subject was to be debated under. I think we really do need clarification of that point in advance before we are able to either seek instructions or take a decision. Indeed, I mean, if the question is to be put before us, can we have, ideally, something in writing so that we can see what it looks like? I am not insisting on that - perhaps it can be spelt out now. But are we talking about the old mandates or are we talking about the possibility of discussing new mandates? - because if that possibility is open, we would like to be aware of it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom. I propose open-ended consultations tomorrow morning and in the afternoon we will resume the plenary. I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): The proposal was made by Sri Lanka and my delegation will accept any course of action accepted by Sri Lanka. My delegation would simply like to place on record its formal protest at the way in which we are proceeding. Double standards are being applied. It is true it is 6.10 p.m. If I remember correctly, it was on 12 June that we were forced to take a decision at 1.35 p.m., when most delegations had commitments for lunch and the interpreters were also about to leave. I will accept whatever the representative of Sri Lanka accepts. On the previous occasion when a delegation made a specific proposal, several delegations asked, and Mexico was not the only one, for informal consultations and we were denied them. We were told, I repeat, that every delegation has the right to make a proposal, and has the right for the President to put that proposal to the Conference for consideration, and for the Conference to take a decision. Today we are following a different procedure and adopting a different yardstick. Judging by what we have seen, when proposals come from a delegation in the Group of 21 they receive treatment that is different from when they come from other groups.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I have listened carefully to all the proposals, and I have not refused any of them. I propose that we hold a plenary meeting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

The meeting was suspended at 6.15 p.m. on Thursday 26 June 1997
and resumed at 10.35 a.m. on Friday 27 June 1997.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The 770th plenary meeting is resumed. The representative of Myanmar has asked for the floor as Coordinator of the Group of 21. I give him the floor.

Mr. ABEL (Myanmar): First of all, Madam President, may I congratulate you on behalf of the Group and also on our own behalf on your assumption of the presidency at this crucial juncture? You have achieved a certain degree of success in a few days, and I hope that the momentum will continue today. My thanks and appreciation also go to your predecessor, Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, for her energetic efforts for the Conference during her presidency.

In my capacity as the Coordinator of the Group of 21, I would like to make the following points. First, the Group of 21 continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. Secondly, without prejudice to the Group's proposal in document CD/1462, dated 5 June 1997, a proposal was submitted by the delegation of Sri Lanka, which was supported by many delegations from different groups, and therefore I would like to request that the Conference take immediate action on that proposal without any further delay.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Myanmar for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. In accordance with the agreement reached yesterday afternoon, I invite the Conference to consider the proposal presented by the representative of Sri Lanka concerning the programme of work of the Conference. I would therefore like to invite the Conference to make a decision on the elements of that proposal. First, is there agreement for the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons? I would like to remind you in this regard that the last mandate adopted by the Conference on Disarmament for the Committee appears in document CD/1121. I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Canada did not intervene yesterday when we started down this particular path because, quite frankly, we were not quite sure where we were starting and where we were going to end up. We believe that it is essential that the CD be able to consider elements that various delegations and various groups feel are important and should or might be included in our work. The question of what those items should be, and how they should be pursued, I think has to be carefully considered. The question of looking at a question of an ad hoc committee with a mandate that we have not had the opportunity to sit down and to consult about informally under your guidance or in any other way you see fit, but merely just establishing an ad hoc committee, and doing so in a kind of expeditious fashion, we have serious reservations about. We are willing to look at any proposal for work, in any order that the Conference wishes to pursue. Delegations in this room know clearly what Canada's national views are in that regard. We have tried very hard to make those clear in spoken form and in written form, but we know a number of our views are not totally shared in this room and that our priorities may not necessarily be shared in this room. But I was, and am, reluctant to continue the way that we have started here, following upon my friend from Sri Lanka's proposal yesterday, in a yes-or-no format, which is not a process which gives us an opportunity to explore what we really are agreeing to do and whether we really do think it is important, viable, achievable, worthwhile. Now against that background, I think my objective is not to be taking a definitive position on any particular mechanism or any particular mandate at this point, but I do question whether this is the kind of process that is a useful one and a productive one for us to pursue. I felt it was unfair to you, Madam, and to other members of the CD not to at least raise that point here this morning before we actually start taking decisions as you indicated as our President you felt you would have to proceed. We will continue to try to be as helpful to you as possible.

Mr. KREID (Austria): We did take the floor yesterday, as will be remembered. What I was trying to convey is that we basically were sympathetic about looking at the possibilities of adding to our work, and that we had this proposal from Sri Lanka. However, as will be remembered, I said we take a risk in going step by step, and might be very disappointed at the end of this process. Having listened to our colleague from Canada, it is obvious that we cannot rush into adopting a proposal here which leads us to the institution of ad hoc committees or of coordinators without even having had time to look at the details of the mandate or at the details of the terms of reference. So our understanding would have been that if you ask this question, Madam - and of course it is in itself maybe not the most elegant and most productive method to ask seven questions, one after the other - but if you ask this question and you find that there is readiness among delegations to deal with this item, it seems to be inevitable to me that we have to move into an informal consultation in order to establish the details, as has been pointed out by Ambassador Moher. We cannot simply say we decide here and now, without further deliberations, to establish an ad hoc committee, or whatever it is. This, at least, was our understanding. We did not object against the principle of moving along the lines of Sri Lanka's suggestion, but of course it would have been rather naive to believe that everybody would say, "Yes, let's have it right now and on the spot".

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): My delegation had the opportunity to make an intervention yesterday in which we welcomed the appointment of a Special Coordinator on landmines, and I would like to take this opportunity once again to say that this was a wise move on the part of the Conference, a proposal which Pakistan had put forward on 30 January, and we are very glad that we were able to adopt it before 30 June. Having said that, I think that my delegation is in a comfortable position to also speak about the rest of the actions that this Conference should take with regard to its programme of work. Over the course of the past months, we have had within this hall, as well as outside, loud lamentations about the Conference on Disarmament, about its inability to reach decisions and about the absence of negotiating mechanisms that could address the items on the agenda. We took a first step yesterday to respond to these criticisms and lamentations. The Group of 21 feels, however, that the action that we took yesterday is not sufficient and that there are several other issues on which apparently, and I underline "apparently", there is no disagreement within the Conference with regard to the negotiations that we have to undertake. Indeed, there are items, such as the issue of negative security assurances, on which we have already negotiated. We have in the past created ad hoc committees. We have agreed on a mandate, and one on which no one in the Conference has, at least openly, expressed opposition. Therefore, it seems to my delegation, and I believe to the Group of 21, that the Conference on Disarmament should capture the momentum that we generated yesterday, and take decisions on those further issues on which there is no opposition. I believe that on the issue of negative security assurances, which has been proposed as the first item by the delegation of Sri Lanka, supported by the Group of 21, there is no opposition, and therefore we hope that the Conference will be able to approve the re-establishment of that Ad Hoc Committee today, with the mandate that is contained in document CD/1121, and we [illegible] that you will put that proposition to the Conference, Madam. Even [illegible] statement that we heard from the distinguished Ambassador of Canada, we [illegible] not detect any opposition to this proposal, and I hope he will confirm that [illegible] that there is no opposition to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances. So my proposal is that you put it formally to the Conference and ask if there is any opposition to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): My delegation is most pleased that yesterday [illegible] came to a consensus decision on the question of APLs and decided to appoint [illegible] special coordinator. My delegation welcomes the decision. In fact, this is a decision welcomed by all of us. Under your presidency, Madam President, as well as with efforts by your predecessors, this is the only result achieved by the CD this year. This is something very gratifying.

During yesterday's plenary, my delegation listened very carefully to the views expressed by all sides. The impression we had was that on the question of the work programme the CD could not devote itself to only the question of APLs. In other words, we should at the same time work on other issues. I didn't hear any objection to that understanding. In view of that, it is only appropriate for us to take decisions with regard to other items in the work programme. As to whether we eventually can come to a decision, that will only be clear when we reach the point of making that decision. If we cannot come to a decision we can still have informal consultations. However, there is one point that has to be clear: the CD cannot concentrate on landmines alone. That is the first point I would like to make.

Next, on the NSA issue. That is also the first issue raised by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka which calls for our decision. My delegation certainly supports his proposition. On this issue, my delegation would give its unwavering support to the legitimate demand from the G-21. The reason is as follows: in recent years there have been great changes. Although we are confronted with various kinds of difficulties in the international situation changes of a fundamental nature have occurred. This is a fact of life. In other words, the cold war is over. Under the new international circumstances the nuclear Powers have no reason whatsoever not to provide the non-nuclear-weapon States with assurances not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. In particular, in 1995 the NPT

Treaty was extended indefinitely. Most non-nuclear-weapon States supported the indefinite extension of that treaty or at least accepted the indefinite extension. Despite the fact that China itself is a nuclear Power, my delegation holds the view that this constitutes maximum flexibility and a sacrifice made on the part of non-nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, the non-nuclear-weapon States' demand for early assurances not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them is absolutely legitimate. We cannot say that in the world today only nuclear-weapon States should enjoy absolute security whereas other countries shall not have what they deserve in terms of security. Therefore, if a decision is put to a vote, my delegation will resolutely support the establishment of an ad hoc committee. With regard to the mandate of that ad hoc committee, a mandate is already contained in CD/1121. To be frank, my delegation is not entirely pleased with such a weak mandate. That mandate is outdated. However, since the G-21 is ready to use such a mandate, my delegation can agree to take that mandate as a basis. Given the fact that the mandate contained in CD/1121 was agreeable to all of us in 1992, five years later in 1997 such a weak mandate should be even more acceptable. If there is any change to be negotiated, the mandate should be drastically strengthened. These are the views I would like to set out for the time being.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Like most of the speakers before me, I too am very relieved that we were able to take a decision yesterday. As I had pointed out in the plenary yesterday, the decision contained a very important paragraph, which was the chapeau, and I had also said that we needed to start working immediately on the implementation of the chapeau of document CD/1465, and that of course brings us to the other items on the programme of work. The agenda, which we adopted by consensus, does contain agenda item 4. It has been with us since 14 February. It calls for effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. That was agreed to. In addition, as pointed out by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka yesterday in his proposal, and as supported by the G-21, to the best of my knowledge, and not just my knowledge, but my information, the Western Group on 11 September 1996 presented its observations on the agenda and work programme of the CD in 1997, and we see there, in document CD/1434, that it said in this as the German Ambassador quoted yesterday: "Ad hoc committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and TIA", and of course there is a sentence there which says that mandates for the ad hoc committees could be updated. Then I also recall that in his intervention, the distinguished Ambassador of Austria, about two months ago - I have lost track of time, but some time during the last session, in a major intervention in the plenary - had in fact suggested that an ad hoc committee on NSA could be set up, that this was one of the ad hoc committees that could be set up. Taking all of this into account, and because the G-21 wants the CD to start moving on issues which are of priority to a large number of countries, this was included in the programme of work which was presented by the G-21 on 5 June 1997 in document CD/1462, and as the Coordinator of the G-21 said today, the proposal of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka is without prejudice to the priorities that we continue to have on the setting up of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This is an attempt, as we see it, from the delegation of Sri Lanka to get a decision here today in the CD so that we can move, try to agree on whatever we can agree on immediately, and then move on to the areas which are priority areas for us, through consultations. Those consultations would be necessary.

On the issue of the mandate, I am a little puzzled. I thought at one stage when we were talking informally about an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, we were being told to agree to an ad hoc committee without a mandate, and that would have been acceptable to a large number of countries. But the Ad Hoc Committee on NSA has a mandate in document CD/1121, and I agree with Ambassador Sha of China - this will need to be updated. We can do that once we take the decision to establish the Ad Hoc Committee. There is no question that we would need to update this particular mandate. Therefore, having made these points, I would like to support what was proposed by the Ambassador of Pakistan a few minutes ago, that we now see whether there is any opposition to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on NSA at this session. What I gather from two of the speakers earlier was not an opposition, but a hesitation. I think since we had time overnight to overcome these hesitations, these oppositions which have been publicly stated on the desirability of an ad hoc committee on NSA, we as a Conference should be in a position to take a decision now on this particular issue. But I would like to support what the Ambassador of Pakistan has proposed, that you ask us, the Conference, whether there is any opposition. If there is not, let us establish this committee and go on to the next item. Once the decision is taken, we will certainly have discussions on the mandate contained in document CD/1121, which would form a good basis for us to start. We are not starting afresh. This is not something brand new.

Mr. MARTINEZ MORCILLO (Spain) (translated from Spanish): This Francisco de Vitoria room that we are meeting in is charged with history, and I think yesterday a new important chapter was added to that history, because yesterday the Conference on Disarmament took an important step in establishing the first stage, the first element of what my delegation hopes will be a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament this year. I understand in my personal interpretation of yesterday's meeting, apart from the work done by you, Madam President, which prompts my complete admiration for the truly splendid way in which you accomplished your work, that the decision that was adopted was first and foremost the fruit of an attitude which I believe is unanimous in this Conference. It is the determination of the vast majority of delegations to move forward, to establish a consistent programme of work and truly succeed in demonstrating that the Conference on Disarmament can, in the future, continue to be one of the basic bodies of today's international relations. At the same time for me there is a clear idea, namely that no one wants the mines issue to be the only one before this Conference. From that starting-point, I would like to give voice to the greatest doubts about the productiveness, the effectiveness and the usefulness of the path on which we have embarked this morning. My delegation has absolutely no problem in considering the proposal contained in document CD/1462 as a basis for discussion. We feel that it could be a good working document, and it could be a magnificent point of departure. But my delegation has many doubts as to whether the outcome of consideration of this issue, this proposal today will be useful and fruitful for the Conference. This does not mean that my delegation, if the members of this Conference so wish, is not ready and prepared to take decisions on each one of them. But all the proposals, all the elements of this proposal, raise many doubts for my delegation, and although it is true that there are some clear trends in the Conference, I feel that before we take decisions, it would be wise to clear up these doubts, clarify our position and try to move closer to positions of compromise and understanding. I repeat that my delegation has doubts in general, and has doubts in that regard on the matter at present before us for decision. My delegation has absolutely no doubt about its position. It has very clear instructions on each of the issues, on the general attitude that the Spanish delegation should adopt during this first stage of its participation in this Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is indeed ready to take a decision on this. I can assure you, Madam President, that if today this Conference on Disarmament takes a decision to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear assurances, my delegation's certainty on its position will be completely filled with doubts and difficulties when it comes to explain to its Government what has been decided, how this Ad Hoc Committee is constituted within the present structure of international relations, whether the Committee takes into account the political circumstances of 1997, whether the Committee takes into account that there has been a process of development and progress in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. These are the doubts which, I confess, my delegation will have great difficulty in explaining to its Government.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh): My delegation did not take the floor yesterday. I should therefore like to begin today by conveying through you, Madam, and through our Australian representative here our sincere congratulations to my friend and colleague, Ambassador John Campbell, upon his appointment as Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. His task will not be easy but he is a man of prodigious capabilities and with the excellent back-up support that he has at his Mission and in Canberra, I am confident that he will do a splendid job.

For the CD it would be a pity if progress in our work were to stop there. We are now addressing a definite set of proposals from the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka. These have the merit of being reasonable. They command wide cross-group support, and this is important in the context of the CD. Thirdly, it will give us something to report to the General Assembly, something definite, the absence of the possibility of which was a concern that was expressed here. I agree with my Austrian colleague that it does not look very elegant for you to ask one question after another, but if that is the process or procedure by which we are able to achieve progress, my delegation for one, and I am sure others around, would be willing to sacrifice a modicum of elegance for progress in this house. I would therefore support the proposal of Pakistan, as supported thereafter by India and others, that you ask the question whether we are prepared to have an ad hoc committee on NSA, and if that be so, let us go forth with no further ado.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): I shall be as brief as possible. The statement made by the Coordinator of the Group of 21 is a statement which I fully support. I also support the statements made by my colleagues members of the Group of 21 and by the Ambassador of China concerning this subject which is under consideration.

The question raised concerns the establishment of an ad hoc committee on NSA. We strongly endorse the need to put this question forward and we support the re-establishment of this ad hoc committee so that it can start working immediately in order to provide the necessary assurances to non-nuclear States within the framework of a legally binding international multilateral instrument that provides such guarantees for non-nuclear States.

This topic was among the vital issues which we have raised and in the deliberation of which we have previously participated very actively at the CD. We consider this issue extremely important since, as long as we are unable to eliminate nuclear weapons completely, there will always be an urgent need to give legally binding multilateral guarantees to the non-nuclear States in order to assure them against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. So long as nuclear weapons exist, we will always need these guarantees in a legally binding international multilateral instrument.

If we had succeeded in eliminating nuclear weapons, we would not need such guarantees. However, since this urgent need exists, we hope that this question will be answered and we hope that the answer will be in the affirmative. My country's delegation supports this proposal and endorses the statements made by my colleagues, the Ambassadors and representatives of various countries, who have spoken in favour of the establishment of this committee, bearing in mind the fact that the top priority is obviously nuclear disarmament.

We have approved the decision concerning the establishment of the post of Special Coordinator to deal with the question of landmines, and we are happy that the Special Coordinator is the Ambassador of Australia. We have full confidence in his ability and in the ability of his country's delegation in this regard. However, we approved that decision with some reluctance because this issue is not accorded priority on our agenda. Nevertheless we approved the decision in good faith while, at the same time, stressing the need to deal with the programme of work for the CD. The question put forward now is a question which we support because we have agreed to the indefinite extension of the NPT on the basis of the decision on objectives and principles and we even participated in the drafting of that decision, which stressed the need for a legally binding international multilateral instrument to deal with this issue because we were not convinced by Security Council resolution 984 which referred to unilateral and multilateral assurances given by the nuclear Powers in this regard. We considered this resolution insufficient.

In the light of this explanation, which might help colleagues to understand the background to this issue, the delegation of Egypt fully supports the establishment of this committee, and, if the mandate is incomplete, we are ready to complete it. We too believe that it is incomplete because we need comprehensive security assurances, on which we stand ready to negotiate, within the framework of an ad hoc committee on this subject, and to consider whether it is possible to develop this mandate. We are ready to start negotiations on the basis of the existing mandate. Madam President, since I have heard no objection to the establishment of this committee, I hope that you will immediately put this question to the members of the Conference.

Mr. BAALLAL (Algeria): Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, Madam President, and since we are still at the beginning of the morning, I shall venture to express the customary congratulations without fearing that this could be viewed as a waste of time. So allow me to tell you how happy and delighted the Algerian delegation is to see you in the Chair, and how pleased it is at the way in which you are conducting our work. Our gratitude also goes to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Senegal, and his delegation. It is really a pleasure for the delegation of Algeria to see the podium in our chamber today occupied by three delegations which, a few months ago, were observers and are now taking full part in our work and are presiding over it.

I had understood yesterday at the end of the afternoon when you suspended our plenary that you were doing so because of time constraints so as to be able to release the interpreters and delegations who had commitments. This suspension happily gave delegations an opportunity to have time overnight to think and perhaps even to consult with their capitals. For its part, the Algerian delegation has been ready since yesterday to respond to the questions that the Ambassador of Sri Lanka had asked you to put to us. My delegation had prepared for that because it had felt that we could not do otherwise than accede to this request, which is based on the rules of procedure of our Conference and on the practice as I have witnessed it here. My delegation therefore considers that this is a sound, pragmatic and constructive approach, insofar as, at least as I understand it, it may allow us to take immediate decisions on consensual points and to entrust those points that are not subject to a consensus to your consultations - consultations that you will be free to hold perhaps even during the inter-sessional period. So Madam President, seven questions were asked yesterday, and my delegation, like many others in this chamber, is ready to respond by silence which means consent if it agrees, or by saying no if it does not agree. Doubts have been expressed as to the effectiveness of this approach. If it is a good one, it will enable us to take immediate decisions. If it is not, we will not take any decisions. You began with a first question this morning; I think we could continue in this direction and pursue this exercise.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): First of all, I should like to record my satisfaction at the developments which occurred yesterday, not only because we were able to take a decision with regard to a special coordinator on mines, but also because yesterday's meeting enabled the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to propose a useful approach which involves considering each subject on its own merits, independently of any package. I think this is also an important achievement from yesterday's meeting. Having said that, we must express a view on the different elements of the seven questions posed by Sri Lanka, to which we should add, as you know, the question posed by Germany. I would like to associate myself with the deep doubts expressed by Spain, Canada and Austria about the most appropriate method of taking decisions on the questions raised by Sri Lanka. If I may refer to the past, with regard to the decision on mines, we firs[illegible]al proposal made by Finland in mid-March. That proposal was then p[illegible] It received a CD symbol on 31 March. Then we held informal cons[illegible] under the auspices of the President, which led to a document issue[illegible]ay, and we were able to take the decision we took yesterday.

On the question of security assurances, it seems to us that on some of the questions raised by Sri Lanka we have reached the point we were at with regard to mines on 15 March, in that we have no written proposal. So I think that the first stage before we do anything else - and this could be done in a quarter of an hour - is for us to have a proposal in writing. If not, I am afraid that the decision-making process here will not move forward in a constructive manner and that we will lose the momentum we have today which my delegation particularly wants to preserve.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): I have been listening to the discussion this morning with great interest, and particularly to the remarks made by the distinguished representative of France. First of all, I would like to remind the Conference that last week there was a proposal by the representative of Syria for informal consultations, and there were no comments, which led him to say that if there are no objections, perhaps we could then go ahead and establish the mechanisms enumerated in document CD/1462. Now we hear the long and difficult path we followed with regard to the landmines. It is true, and we are happy that we have a decision as well as another decision to appoint a Special Coordinator, and we congratulate the Ambassador of Australia in his difficult task. If we want to go back to the proposals in documents, we can start with the proposal contained in document CD/1434 of 16 September, proposed by the Western Group. If that is not sufficient, we can go to the proposal which is contained, once again in written form, in document CD/1462. So there are no difficulties with regard to these written proposals. But with regard to NSA, the proposal is very simple. If there is no objection - I repeat the word "objection" - to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on NSA, and there is sufficient institutional memory here, that Committee functioned with a particular mandate, and the distinguished Ambassador of India pointed out, following the comments made by the distinguished Ambassador of China, that the mandate of that particular committee is not considered good enough. That could be discussed. Now the question you have asked from the Conference is whether there is any objection, and I have not heard any objection so far. Perhaps you can go ahead and establish the ad hoc co[illegible] and move on to the next item, because we have about six or seven diffe[illegible] items and I think at least we should try to finish this discussion duri[illegible] course of this morning.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I have asked for the floor merely because I have listened very carefully to several of the statements that have been made, and particularly to the statement of my distinguished friend from France. He stated that we have to consider decisions on the basis of documents, and I think that the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka has already drawn his attention to the fact that the proposal on negative security assurances has been on the table for several weeks, if not months, and it is time that we take a decision. This proposal was specifically made, for example, by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in document CD/1450 on 20 March 1997. It is the first point in that proposal of Iran. It was not considered. The Group of 21 thereafter on 5 June submitted document CD/1462 in which there is also a written proposal to establish the ad hoc committee on negative security assurances. Therefore, I believe that the argument that we should be obliged to go through the tortuous process which we were obliged to go through on the question of anti-personnel landmines, that it ought to be repeated on each proposal on each action which the Conference on Disarmament takes, I think is something that I certainly hope we will not make a habit of, and I would very gently seek to persuade my colleague from France away from that path of action. From the statements that we have heard, there has been, as far as we can see, no objection to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances. We are prepared to discuss the question of the mandate, of updating the mandate, after the re-establishment of the Committee. Therefore, we would urge you, Madam, that you put to the house whether there is any objection to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances, and if there is not, let us take a decision today to re-establish this Committee. We can then move on to other issues.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): I, too, have listened with interest to the discussion this morning. Perhaps one of the things we might want to consider under the category of improved and effective functioning is how to rearrange the room so that we can look at each other when we talk.

On a serious note, my delegation welcomes the decision taken yesterday to appoint a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, and as has already been noted by my distinguished colleague from France, that is a decision that had been several months in the works as it had been the subject of several pieces of paper and several revisions. Its success we welcome and perhaps we can call it momentum, perhaps it is not momentum.

The question we are now facing today is that we are being asked to decide on issues of much greater import, i.e. what it is that we are actually going to agree to work on. The Special Coordinator would help us perhaps find some work to do on landmines, but at this point we have not agreed to do it. It seems to me that we need time to reflect on this and to give these important questions the consideration they deserve. My delegation, too, wants to take advantage of forward movement but we think that there should be forward movement with due deliberation. I would think we would all agree that the idea is not for the CD just to make work or to be busy or to have something to report. The important question is: what is it that we are going to work on? What is it that is worthy of our attention? What is it that is substantive and productive work?

In that context, the question we have been discussing is negative security assurances. There are at least one or two other people in this room that have a history that goes back as far as mine does on the question of negative security assurances. I sat in the Chair of the Working Group at that time in the year 1980, so I am certainly familiar with the issue, and I am familiar with the mandate. At the same time, a lot of time has passed since 1979 when that Ad Hoc Committee, or at that time it was a Working Group, was first established, and indeed, for the reasons already cited by the distinguished Ambassador of China, we believe it is important to have a discussion of what it is and what, as an ad hoc committee, it would do. So, while we do not object to having an ad hoc committee, we think it is important to define what it is that we would do with that ad hoc committee. A lot of things have happened over the past several years. Legally binding assurances have been offered by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones. A Security Council resolution has been passed in the past few years offering positive security assurances. The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference in 1995 made some recommendations on negative security assurances, and this is indeed an issue that is being looked at in the PrepCom process for the year 2000 Review Conference. So, there is no objection but there is a concern that we have, the discussion about what it is an ad hoc committee would do, and my delegation, for one, is not in a position to agree to select, to appoint, to adopt a decision on an ad hoc committee without knowing first what it is to do. So that is a discussion which seems to me that we have to have before we can agree to adopt that decision.

Ms. GHOSE (India): From what the distinguished representative of the United States said, it is all a matter of perspective. It is where you sit that the view is different. But anyhow, on a serious note, I would not have taken the floor had the distinguished delegate of the United States not raised some very valid points. I noted with interest that she said that the United States does not have an objection to the setting up of an ad hoc committee on NSAs. I am also aware that this is a very old subject, but there was a decision in the General Assembly last year. The document number - and this is for my colleague from France - it is in writing - is A/RES/51/43, dated 7 January 1997. Resolution 51/43 is on the "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". It is a long resolution and in paragraph 5, it takes into account all the developments since 1989. It said, "Recommends also that the Conference on Disarmament should actively continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement and concluding effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, taking into account the widespread support for the conclusion of an international convention and giving consideration to any other proposals designed to secure the same objective". The General Assembly has given us, let us say, as much of a clarification on this issue as recently as late last year.

I also think we need to make a distinction on another issue. I think landmines did take a long time, yes, but as was pointed out earlier, this was a brand new subject in the CD. It was here for the first time, and people were not aware of how this should be looked at, and this is why a Special Coordinator has been appointed to see how we should, if at all, look at this issue. NSAs is not a new subject, and NSAs, the request for an ad hoc committee, has been coming from different groups, and as the Ambassador of Germany said yesterday, it was a Western Group proposal in 1996. This is their right. This is what they wanted. It is also, as it happens, a G-21 proposal. So today we have the Western Group agreeing to an ad hoc committee on NSAs and the G-21 agree. We should be celebrating this particular event instead of saying that we need more time to see whether in fact we agree, and we have it in writing. We have it in writing from both groups. I also take into account that the Group of 21 has agreed. So we only have the East European Group who have not voiced their views on this subject yet. From my list of speakers, who is objecting today to this decision? As I said, in my view, we need to discuss, certainly, what the mandate would be, once we have taken the decision to have an ad hoc committee to negotiate what the General Assembly has given us, what the General Assembly expects us to do. And to that extent, we have guidelines coming from the General Assembly. Of course, the General Assembly has not got the authority to tell us what to do. We are sovereign. But it is recommended. The international community has recommended to us what it is we should do. We are all agreed on the substance. Why is it that there is this hesitation on this particular decision?

I think I am taking too long. I am getting all kinds of signs from all sides that I should stop. But I really have to express my puzzlement. Is there an objection to setting up an NSA ad hoc committee now, on the understanding that we will be discussing the specific mandate once that decision is taken? Is there an objection?

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): As the Ambassador of India knows better than anyone, but perhaps for those of us who may have somewhat lost sight of it, the General Assembly resolution which has been referred to received an abstention not only by France but I think by all the countries of the European Union. Since I have the floor, and I would not like to have to speak again if at all possible, I would just like to say to the Ambassador of Pakistan that, of course, we do not intend, on subjects other than mines, to follow such tortuous paths - we would like them to be as rapid as possible, but that does not mean that they should not go through the same stages. The stages do not need to be separated by periods of three weeks, but I think if we want to achieve something, we have to go through the same stages. Lastly, I should like to repeat that, of course, the question of negative security assurances has been before this assembly since the beginning of the year, but nevertheless, as far as I know, only about 20 minutes have been devoted to the substantive discussion of it, during the time when Romania was in the Chair, and I would like to repeat that, even if the elements of the decision do in fact appear in various papers, the decision itself which we are invited to adopt has still not been formulated in writing, and I must say that at the time of speaking, having heard what was just indicated by the highly respected Ambassador of India, or her counterpart from Pakistan, I still do not know whether what we are being asked to do is to set up a committee without a mandate, the mandate of which will be updated, or with the 1992 mandate, that mandate being subject to updating, or with the 1992 mandate with no changes. For that reason, if we want to be able to take a decision, as a previous speaker mentioned, I think what is necessary, and this is not just a delaying tactic because I think it could be done in 10 minutes by the secretariat, is that we should have a paper before us, whether it has a CD symbol or not does not matter, but we should have a piece of paper that explains to us exactly what we are deciding on.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): I apologize for asking for the floor again. In my earlier statement, I mentioned that there is a mandate contained in CD/1121. I said that I was not very satisfied with the mandate and I also said that it could be improved. However, I should like to clarify one thing. My delegation can accept the mandate as it is.

Mr. TAUWHARE (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): As we said on many occasions before, this delegation is of course ready to work constructively and in good faith to get started on some substantive work here in the CD. We regret at least as much as others do the failure of the Conference so far this year to make a start on work which is, in our view, clearly laid out before us. It seems to us that the work of the CD is best focused on substantive negotiations where we can secure some genuine productive achievement rather than in procedural manoeuvring, empty debate and posturing. We are as keen as others to get on with the work. Indeed, it was with this in mind that we worked in the Western Group last year to put together some proposals that were tabled in September 1996, which were referred to yesterday by the German Ambassador and have been picked up subsequently. In the Western Group paper that was tabled, document CD/1434, we made very clear what our objectives were. We argued that the work of the CD should strike a balance between nuclear and conventional items. It should focus on substantive negotiations, and work should start on negotiations which have already been endorsed by the CD, and those were spelt out as being fissile material cut-off, NSAs, outer space, transparency in armaments. So those issues, those four, were clearly before us and had clearly got the support of this delegation. Now I asked last night - I fear I asked twice - if I could have some clarity on what decisions it was that we were expected to take today in order that we could get some instructions or at least have a clearer picture of what it was we were deciding upon. My specific question was, what were to be the mandates of the ad hoc committees we were being asked to establish. I fear I did not get a very clear answer to that then, and I haven't had a clear answer to it today. Listening to the debate, th[illegible] been references to the mandate on NSAs in document CD/1121. There [illegible] been references to other documents - CD/1462, UNGA resolutions, po[illegible] mandate at all. I come back to the question. What are we deciding [illegible] we setting up an ad hoc committee with no mandate, or are we trying to se[illegible] an ad hoc committee with a mandate? And if so, what mandate is that, please? On that basis, I would very much support my distinguished French colleague in asking to see what the mandate is. Of course, I have CD/1121 in front of me. If it is to be CD/1121, then let us be clear on that. Once we are clear on that, we can judge whether it is worthwhile proceeding. Again, listening to the discussion this morning, it is clear that there is no agreement, it seems to me, on exactly what the mandate should be. A number of speakers have suggested, let us set up the ad hoc committee with no mandate and then get into discussions on the mandate. The old mandate needs updating. We need to work further on it. That seems to be very sensible. Let us discuss the mandate. But is it sensible to establish the ad hoc committee in advance of agreeing on what the mandate should be? That seems to me putting the cart before the horse. By all means, let us discuss the mandate, and indeed, let us discuss the mandates and their own substance, what work the CD can most effectively do in these various areas, not just NSAs, but in these other areas, too. We are willing to discuss that. But we do not think we will achieve very much if we simply go through a list and set up a whole series of ad hoc committees with no mandate and then proceed to have an argument over what the mandate should be. Does that take us forward? I do not think so. So let us be as clear as we possibly can be what it is that we think the CD can most productively do, what specific mandates we are considering, and then, by all means, proceed to take a decision to establish those ad hoc committees - once we are clear what we are talking about.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I have, since my last intervention, heard with great interest the remarks that have been made by my colleagues from the United States, France and the United Kingdom. I would like to remind the distinguished representative of the United States that we both have long memories with regard to the issue of negative security assurances, and we are aware that the difficulty on negative security assurances is not so much with regard to the precise wording of the mandate, that it has to do with the substantive positions of some of the nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, I think that the issues raised about the mandate perhaps are an afterthought, because if you see the document that was submitted by the Western Group, document CD/1434, on page 2, second paragraph, it says "ad hoc committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments," and I underline "immediately"; this was on 11 September 1996. I think therefore, that, it is not too early to take the decision. The paragraph goes on to say "the mandates for the ad hoc committees could be updated." It does not say that the establishment of these ad hoc committees is conditional on updating those mandates. In other words, we set up the ad hoc committees immediately and we update the mandates. This is precisely what has been proposed with regard to the ad hoc committee on negative security assurances, precisely the position of the Western Group on 11 September 1996. Therefore, if my colleague from the United Kingdom wants to have a clear idea of what we are deciding on, it is this proposal and if he wishes to have it in written form, it is in CD/1462, paragraph 1, subparagraph III, which says the Conference on Disarmament decides to establish "an ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, 'Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons'," and here, if it will be the situation, we could add that the mandate of the ad hoc committee as contained in document CD/1121 could be updated. These are the words of the Western Group, "could be updated", and we hope and we trust that there will be no objection to this proposition and therefore, Madam President, for the third time this morning I would request you to put to the Conference whether there is any objection to the establishment of the ad hoc committee on negative security assurances in the terms which I have just proposed.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): I am sorry our question has provoked such a debate. There are two dimensions to this question: one is the process that we are using, and the second is the substance of each individual point. My friend, Munir Akram, challenged me earlier to answer his question and, since I fear his gentle persuasion, I would like to answer it.

On substance, without getting into the details, Canada has no difficulty recognizing that we agreed to the Western Group paper of last September, with the associated statement that we like to see cited every now and then, as in Canada's statement in January and the associated paper with it and in our statement in May with the paper that was circulated officially, whereby we refer to negative security assurances as a possible subject of work in this Conference. We have no problem with the substance of that issue. So, therefore, turning this into some kind of a credibility or integrity test I find a little bit questionable. The point that I addressed earlier, which initiated this debate, was one of process. In taking this course of action, a series of seven or more questions being put one after the other with "yes/no" answers. Are we being conscious of the fact that we are both taking priority decisions and resource decisions, both for the Conference and for our individual delegations? And, secondly, are we clear in our mind that we are establishing a mechanism with a mandate? For Canada's part, we are strongly opposed to the idea of establishing mechanisms without mandates. We think that is a recipe for futility.

On the basis of the discussion that has taken place here, the answer for many delegations is "yes, we think this deserves priority; yes, we are prepared to devote the resources; yes, we want a mechanism, an ad hoc committee, and yes, we are satisfied with the mandate in CD/1121 of 1992, which needs to be updated but we are willing to work with it". Now, if that is the question that is being put, if this Conference as a conference - this is from Canada's perspective only - feels that it has answered the question of priority, resources, mechanism and mandate, to the point that this Conference is comfortable with that, Canada on substance has no difficulties with negative security assurances being addressed in the CD. And Canada agrees. So I am answering the question put by my friend from Pakistan. But what I want to be absolutely clear about is that we are going to apply the same test as we go through the rest of the questions that are put. We agree on priority, on resources, on mechanism and on mandate and we agree that even though mandates that exist may need updating, we are prepared to take a decision today to proceed on the basis of the mandates that exist.

So, in sum, if the question, as Ambassador Akram put it, is: is Canada prepared to accept the establishment of an ad hoc committee to deal with negative security assurances on the basis of CD/1121, our answer is, if this Conference as a whole feels that that meets the test that I have put up, Canada does not object. But I do question whether we are in fact doing ourselves a service by going through this kind of very simplistic and abbreviated exercise.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Madam President, I am sorry to keep taking the floor again and again. I come from the same parliamentary tradition as at least two of the speakers, and we have an excellent vehicle in our tradition which is normally called filibustering: we can come up with all kinds of issues and questions when we know we do not want to take a decision and we will look at the clock and it will be 12 o'clock and then 1 o'clock and the interpreters will say that time is up, and we will have got by without taking a decision, without anybody having said actually what they feel. We all have doubts, we have doubts about a lot of processes, but I think the issue really before us is clear. And I would like to say to the delegate of France that I am aware of the voting on the General Assembly resolution that I quoted: there were none against it, nobody opposed, and there were a large number of abstentions. But the General Assembly resolution was adopted with a huge majority and with nobody opposing it, which is why I quoted it. If it had had people against it, maybe I would not have quoted it.

Now, let me get back to what we are talking about. This is not a question of priority. If the G-21 had said - and it is not true we did, "We place before this house for decision CD/1462 as a whole, that's it", then we would have been told, "No, no, these are linkages; you are putting a package forward; you go element by element". When the G-21 coordinator spoke today, he said on behalf of all of us that this is without prejudice to our priority. Our priority, and let there be no doubt about it, is the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We have even proposed a mandate formally, in writing. But, given our effort to try and get a decision on this last day of this part of the session, we felt that the Sri Lankan approach of getting an agreement in the CD on an issue where it appeared that the Western Group and the G-21 were agreed would have been the easiest way forward. Clearly it is not. We're talking of priorities. No, this is not my priority. My priority is an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with the mandate which is contained in document CD/1463.

But I have agreed to move with this Conference to try and find areas where there is a possibility of agreement. And we felt that on NSAs there is a possibility of agreement. And we have spent two hours in saying, "We agree with you, but we don't agree with you". Alright, if we don't agree on that, let's have this out. There is no agreement because there are some countries - I've got a list of five countries, but one country is sufficient - which object. So let us get on to the next one. And the next one is "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". And I presume we will go through the next one hour on PAROS. After we have finished PAROS, presumably we will then reconvene in the afternoon. And we will go to the third one. If you wish, and if that is the desire of those who have objected to the proposal of an ad hoc committee on NSAs, we will then present the entire thing as a package. And if anybody uses the word linkage, I don't know what I will do, but ...

I am very serious. We deliberately said this is not an issue on which we wish to make linkages. We did not seek to make any linkage or blockage when the landmine decision went through. We are now saying, here is one area on which there was agreement. There's been no opposition either in the

General Assembly, and there's been a positive recommendation coming from the Western Group. That recommendation was picked up by the G-21. Maybe we should have objected. And maybe then we would have got an agreement. The G-21 perhaps should not agree so easily. I think, if it is clear that there is objection, let that be down on the record, and let us get on to PAROS.

Mr. ZEMSKOV (Russian Federation)(translated from Russian): The Russian delegation welcomes the decision taken yesterday on the appointment of a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We feel that that decision is of fundamental importance from the point of view of the approaches and way of working in this forum. Accordingly, we view what the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka has proposed regarding the way in which we should proceed on the other items of a possible programme of work as contributing towards improving our work and making it more effective. In our opinion, everything that has happened in our Conference so far and that has led the Conference into something of an impasse as regards the organization of its work is the consequence of the very misguided practice of establishing linkages and package decisions. Now we see encouraging signs of a move away from that practice and we very much hope that we shall not lose our momentum with respect to the further resolution of all the questions that are before us and that really are ripe for practical decision-making. The Russian delegation, as coordinator of the Eastern European Group, takes up the challenge to the Group thrown down by the distinguished Ambassador of India on the question what has been and is the Group's position on the issues now being discussed. I confirm, on the basis of the information available to me, that during the past year in all the discussions, in informal consultations and presidential consultations alike, the coordinators of the Eastern European Group have always stated that the Group had a flexible position on re-establishing existing ad hoc committees with the mandates they had at the time. As I understand it, and now I am speaking on behalf of the Russian delegation, our Conference is a living organism that evolves and that can envisage making changes in its working methods and in the substance of the issues it discusses. I think that my reply gives a pretty clear picture of our position on the question that we are talking about today.

Mr. BAIDI-NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, congratulations on your assumption of the presidency and on the way you are conducting the work of the Conference at this very important juncture. We especially express our gratitude to you that you led the discussions on the appointment of a Special Coordinator on landmines to a successful conclusion.

It seems from the discussions that we have had till now that we can judge that there is no objection to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances. The question has been raised whether we should establish the ad hoc committee together with a mandate or can have an ad hoc committee without a mandate. The question also has been raised what should be the mandate and which document we should have as the basis for the mandate of the ad hoc committee; document CD/1121 especially has been referred to. The distinguished Ambassadors of China and Pakistan have announced that they can go along with that mandate. My delegation also can go along with the mandate in that document.

But I think in this kind of discussion we should bear in mind that this plenary has been convened to take up a decision on the proposal put forward by Sri Lanka yesterday. We have heard comments on how it is inelegant to put a question of yes or no to this decision. My delegation can agree with that, but I think we have now gone beyond elegance, and the main concern in the CD now is to activate the CD to enter into serious negotiations. I think that procedurally we are discussing the proposal formally put forward by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka. I think that the first question put forward by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka maybe needs to be more clear at this stage, whether it's an ad hoc committee without a mandate or a mandate based on document CD/1121 or whatever else, but I think this point should be clarified by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka. He has put forward the proposal, and I think at this stage we should request him kindly to make it more clear. But at this stage it is absolutely necessary to put that question to the CD for a decision.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): My delegation has contributed to the debate this morning in the most positive manner possible: it has remained silent. Of course, my delegation has doubts about the wisdom of the procedure that is being proposed by the representative of Sri Lanka, but my delegation defends the right of the representative of Sri Lanka to make proposals and to require the Conference to decide on them. Of course, like Canada, we have doubts regarding the priorities and the resources allocated. Unlike Canada, we expressed those doubts at the time of the appointment of the coordinator on landmines. For my delegation there is no doubt about what the representative of Sri Lanka proposed: I listened to him very carefully, and the distinguished representative of Pakistan said it. The representative of Sri Lanka proposes that we take a decision as we see it in document CD/1462, paragraph 1, subparagraph III: (continued in English) "The Conference on Disarmament decides to establish an ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, 'Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons'". (continued in Spanish) I wonder, as India did, why we have taken two and a quarter hours repeating the debate that we had yesterday when you have put a specific question to the Conference and the question was whether there is any opposition. Since we have yet to hear any, I suggest, Madam President, that you bang the gavel and state that the Conference adopts this proposal, and that we move on to the next one.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): We agreed yesterday, after very long and sometimes painstaking discussion, on a Special Coordinator on landmines. We welcome this decision, particularly since we succeeded in this decision in giving clear terms of reference to Ambassador Campbell about what he is supposed to do. We hope that we have created a momentum which we will be able to maintain, as I said yesterday in my statement. I mentioned a number of issues which might be addressed, because we clearly feel that the issue of landmines should not be the only item we are addressing. Now, the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka has taken the initiative and proposed a number of items on which we are now being asked to decide. You mentioned first the issue of negative security assurances and the establishment of an ad hoc committee. My delegation has no problems on substance with this issue. A number of delegations, however, have, and they rightly raised the question what would be the terms of reference of such a committee, since also even in the case of a Special Coordinator on landmines we have given terms of reference; so the question what terms of reference, what mandate such a committee would have is a justified one.

Now we have heard in this room different views on whether we should establish a committee without terms of reference, without a mandate, or with a mandate, and document CD/1121 was mentioned. Other delegations have raised doubts whether we should proceed on the basis of this mandate. Clearly, we could take a decision now, but we would find ourselves in a situation in which we would have a committee but we would have some differences, and maybe profound differences, on what this committee is supposed to do. So, we are asking ourselves, while wishing to move ahead with other substantive issues which this Conference should address, whether this would be the wisest way to proceed. And therefore I wonder whether it would not be useful that you, Madam President, have informal consultations on how we should proceed, consultations to clarify some of the issues - whether we should establish a committee with or without a mandate, and if with a mandate, as a number of delegations have suggested, which mandate that should be - so that we would have a more solid basis on which we should proceed. Of course, we could now go through this discussion on all the other items, perhaps until tonight, and my delegation is clearly ready to do so, but I think it might be useful if we have some further informal discussion on this matter in order to be in the same position as we were yesterday when we could agree without major difficulties and chart a clear path on which the future work of the CD should proceed.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): This question is of historic importance for the Conference on Disarmament. It is a subject that has been put in its context and considerable efforts have been made to achieve the objective in the mandate contained in the document that has been mentioned. When the Committee was not re-established, the reasons might have been - to look at the matter from one point of view - that it had not made any substantial progress in fulfilling its mandate. But in fact it was not re-established because of an order of priorities that led us to work more intensively and to devote all the Conference's resources to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That Treaty has been concluded and its provisional regime is in force, that is to say, there is a provisional secretariat. The matter is, in a sense, one that has been left pending, but not pending as regards negotiations. The reasons that existed for suspending some of the committees exist no longer. It is true that in each case we have to take a careful decision with regard to resources and the intention. My delegation has no doubt about the resources, about the intention, or about the priority where this subject is concerned. It seems to us a subject of enormous importance. We know that there are other forums in which this question can be tackled in part, in the NPT review process, in the discussions on nuclear-weapon-free zones within the Disarmament Commission, but none of those forums has the broad mandate of reaching a multilateral agreement that is one of the fundamental objectives of the comprehensive programme of disarmament, one of the fundamental objectives of the new balance now that the cold war is over, one of the fundamental objectives of harmonizing and complementing nuclear disarmament agreements and, above all, non-proliferation agreements with a system that would guarantee the rights of States that have resolved not to have nuclear weapons and to eliminate them from all parts of the Earth or at least to eliminate them from their own territories and areas of jurisdiction, and to have these full assurances in multilateral, effective, uniform terms. I think there is no doubt about this, so if somebody has doubts on the subject it is because they have doubts about the objective. The objective has not been achieved in this forum but it is clearly in this forum that the discussion must take place. So, at the moment of truth, the time to give an answer, this is the answer that must be given. Is this mandate a topical one? It is as topical as can be, the fundamental mandate of the day, and so, on this understanding, my delegation has no doubt that this Conference should reply in the affirmative and act at this session.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Madam President, my reason for taking the floor is to, perhaps, make an appeal - I wouldn't like to say a point of order, but make an appeal that you respond to the proposal of the Group of 21, of Sri Lanka, of Pakistan, which has not been objected to, to take a decision to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances. We have not heard any objection to this proposal. Questions have been raised with regard to the mandate. We believe that it should be re-established with the previous mandate, but we are prepared to have an understanding that that mandate can be updated. I think that is quite natural, reasonable. But there is no objection to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee, and I am a little puzzled why we have spent two and a half hours on a discussion where no one has so far objected to the re-establishment of this Ad Hoc Committee.

So I would appeal to you to put the proposal to the Conference for its approval and that proposal has been clearly stated. And if there is no objection, let us take a decision to establish or re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security. That's my plea and my appeal to you, Madam President, in all fairness.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): Madam President, since I am responsible for this lively debate, let me try to bring it to a conclusion, if it is possible, at least on this specific subject. When you asked the question yesterday, or at least requested my delegation to repeat the question or the proposal I put forward, I very clearly stated, or used the word, "re-establishment" of ad hoc committees on x, y and z. That is, specifically speaking of NSA, outer space and TIA. Then I went on to say that, in the case of nuclear disarmament, it is not re-establishment but it is establishment of an ad hoc committee. This morning, when you opened the plenary, you asked the question with regard to the NSA ad hoc committee, and you also referred to the mandate contained in CD/1121. And of course I think the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan and several others referred to CD/1134, which stated that the mandate could be adapted, before which there was a clear reference that at least three ad hoc committees could be established immediately. The Ambassador of Pakistan said that ad hoc committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and on transparency in armaments. The mandates for the ad hoc committees could be updated. Now, on the basis of this, may I ask you, Madam, to inquire from the Conference whether there is an objection to establishing an ad hoc committee or re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances on the basis of the mandate contained in CD/1121 of 22 January 1992, on the understanding that the Ad Hoc Committee could update its mandate. If you want I can read it slowly once again: "Whether there is an objection to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances on the basis of the mandate contained in CD/1121, of 22 January 1992, on the understanding that the Ad Hoc Committee could update its mandate".

In conclusion, Madam President, it is not the decision to establish an ad hoc committee or the mandate itself which will facilitate our work. It is only the good will and the desire of all members that will facilitate such work. One such example is the Ad Hoc Committee which we established on "cut-off" two years ago with a mandate, and we all know what happened to that committee. And I hope we will be able to take a decision on that matter as well. So we can have ad hoc committees, we can have mandates, still there could be no work. So I would like to stress once again what is important here is the good will and the desire of all of us to work together.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Madam President, like others, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference, and congratulate you and the Conference on the decision that we took yesterday with regard to a Special Coordinator on APL.

Like Ambassador de Icaza of Mexico, I thought that this morning I could best be helpful if I did not say anything at all because this is a rather time-consuming exercise. But like a few others in this hall, I have been here before, a long time ago, and I am sometimes a little bit concerned about the way this Conference nowadays tries to solve the issues that it has before it. If your question would have been this morning whether we are ready to take a decision on the establishment or re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances, I think by now the answer should be clear. Apparently, we are not ready. Why are we not ready? Because I think this decision has not been thoroughly prepared. Now, I think it was always a good tradition in this Conference that decisions were thoroughly prepared before they were taken.

We are having here this kind of discussion this morning in a formal plenary - and what is the difference between a formal plenary and an informal set-up? First of all, we have interpretation here; that costs money, but it has been budgeted. But I am a little bit concerned, given the length of the debate, by what it is the Secretariat has to do. First of all, this whole debate has to be elaborated, has to be typed out from the tapes, then it has to be translated into six languages, and the cost involved is just staggering, I think. It seems to me that, if we go on like this, we should do this in some sort of an informal set-up and then come back and resume and take the decision in the formal plenary. Like we used to do. And like we did until recently. So really what I wanted to say is this: I think we need some more preparation before we make any decisions. This is not a way of trying to prolong a process, but it is meant as advice and I am in sympathy with what

Ambassador Seibert of Germany said: that some informal consultations seem to be in order before we proceed to the actual decision-making. And, like many others, I am grateful for the clarification given by our distinguished colleague from Sri Lanka. I am in complete sympathy, my delegation is in complete sympathy with continuing work on negative security assurances, on outer space and on the question of transparency in armaments, three issues that have been before this Conference before. So it is not a matter of delaying, it is simply a matter of really thinking about how are we going to solve the issues that are before us today in the best possible manner - and, I might add, in the most cost-effective manner.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? Since that is not the case, allow me to sum up our discussion a little. Some delegations have requested that the question of the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances be officially submitted to the Conference for approval. Others have expressed certain doubts concerning the most appropriate method of making a decision on the proposal by the representative of Sri Lanka, and have requested that consultations be continued. One delegation has said it is not ready to make a decision. Questions have been asked about the Committee's mandate. We have three possible approaches: (a) We can re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Guarantees with the mandate contained in document CD/1121; (b) We have the possibility of re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee without a mandate; (c) We have the possibility of re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee after defining its mandate. I was ready to put the question as it was presented by Sri Lanka, but after the discussion that we have had this morning, I think that we must first resolve the question of the procedure we should follow. I would like to stress that I consider the proposal by Sri Lanka legitimate. Personally, I would prefer to continue to hold informal consultations to resolve the problems before us, but since there is no consensus in the Conference on that, I would like to ask the question as the representative of Sri Lanka worded it. I give the floor to the representative of Iran.

Mr. BAIDI-NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam President, I can go along with your last sentence - that you want to put to a decision the proposal by Sri Lanka, but I need to make it clear that my delegation can go into informal consultations only after we have made a decision on the proposal by Sri Lanka.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): My position is identical to that of Iran. There is a formal proposal that has to be put to the Conference. We have heard no objections. We would like to put that proposal to the Conference for a decision. After that, we can decide what we can do later.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, we appreciate your conduct of the discussion and the way you have dealt with its diversity and complexity. We are in full agreement with the previous speakers. We think that this is the procedure. The question must be formulated strictly in the terms used by the initiator of this procedure. If the answer is not unanimous, if it is not concordant, then, indeed, we will have to consider what the next course of action is.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): Madam President, the Chinese delegation would like to appeal to you to respond impartially to the demands and appeals from the relevant delegations. We hope that you will carry out the proper function of the presidency. Take action first, then decide whether to conduct informal consultations. In order to save time, I will now speak English.

(continued in English)

Although I don't like the idea, I should like to launch a protest at the way business was conducted today. I should therefore like to appeal to you to exercise your responsibilities in conformity with the rules of procedure of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China for his statement and since there are no more speakers, I should like to repeat in English the proposal made by the representative of Sri Lanka.

(continued in English):

Is there an objection to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances on the basis of the mandate contained in CD/1121 dated 22 January 1992, on the understanding that the Committee could update its mandate?

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Madam President, if you would put this question to the Conference in the way it is phrased now, I am afraid that I would have to object, because I do not think that it is up to an ad hoc committee to define its own mandate. Mandates are given by the Conference to ad hoc committees. And I am afraid that in the way it is phrased now, that practice would be violated.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Like my colleague from the Netherlands, I have been here before. And I think that the process for updating of mandates has been varied. It has been done in various modalities; mechanisms have been followed to evolve the mandates, including certain efforts by the ad hoc committees themselves, if you recall the nuclear-test-ban discussions. But if the distinguished representative of the Netherlands would be obliged to object to your question, Madam President, on procedural grounds, I am sure that we would help him overcome the procedural difficulties by a slight modification of the question that you may wish to put to the Conference. Instead of saying that the committee would update the mandate, we could just say "on the understanding that the Conference could update the mandate subsequently". I think with that slight modification Ambassador Ramaker would not find this difficult to accept.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): My view is already reflected in the statement by the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan, so I will just give you back the floor.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I think there is not really any objection on this point. It is clear that the committees can, in the analysis of their mandates, and the review of their work, make proposals on those matters to the Conference. The formula proposed by the Ambassador of Pakistan in that regard is faultless. It does, of course, suppose that it is the committee itself that will carry out this work. People like Ambassador Ramaker who are long-standing members of the Conference on Disarmament know better than we who are newer how this is done. That is certainly not an objection to the question as formulated by Sri Lanka and the idea is that, with a sound, permanent mandate, namely the objective of working on an international instrument, and given the circumstances, the climate, the fact that complementary work is going on in other forms too, it may be of interest for this mandate gradually to be refined, polished, amended, improved. And I think no delegation would have any problems with that.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): First of all, I would like to thank the previous speakers, in particular Mexico, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and China, for the spirit of compromise and cooperation which they have shown today and to thank them too for the welcome clarification concerning the question now before us.

Madam President, you have asked a question and it is to that question that I am going to reply, it being understood that if the wording of the question were to be changed we would be prepared to reply to it as well, but it seems to me that the discussion now taking place shows that there is clearly a need for some additional consultations. My country considers it a somewhat unfortunate precedent that we are faced with a purely oral decision that it has not been possible to have communicated in writing or in particular, and you will understand in what spirit I say this, translated into French. Nevertheless, in a spirit of cooperation I will not, at the risk of being severely reprimanded by my capital, dwell on that objection. I would like to say that France wants to think some more and in a constructive spirit about the proposal by Sri Lanka. At the time, it is true that since 1992 fundamental developments have occurred in this area. My capital has not yet come to a definitive decision as to how those changes could be reflected. Therefore, France is not in a position today, and I stress "today", to make an immediate decision on this proposal. To preserve today's momentum and the constructive atmosphere of this meeting and the initial results constituted by today's plenary meeting, I respectfully suggest that the proposal made by Sri Lanka and read by you, Madam President, should be put into writing and translated so that we can send it to our capital and also begin consultations on it after we have finished replying to Sri Lanka's questions. France therefore adds a second objection to that of the Netherlands.

Mr. TAUWHARE (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Madam President, in responding to the question you put as you put it, I fully share the objections raised by the distinguished Representative of the Netherlands. Just looking at the rules of procedures, I see that rule 23 states "the Conference shall define the mandate of each of such subsidiary bodies", so that point is clear. My Government would like to note that we seem to be shooting at a moving target here. The proposal, as I reported it to the authorities last night - and perhaps I misunderstood it, but I took it down as being the wording from document CD/1462 - is this: the Conference on Disarmament decides to establish an ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, and then the title of the agenda item with no mandate, no reference to document CD/1121, nor any reference to understandings about changing the mandate. So that is the proposal that I sought instructions on. Since then, we have been told that CD/1121 should be added to the question. So we were deciding to establish an ad hoc committee with the mandate in CD/1121. Since then, we have also added this idea that the mandate might be updated by the Ad Hoc Committee itself and subsequently, in the last five minutes, we have had another suggestion that perhaps the Ad Hoc Committee should start meeting on one mandate, whilst the Conference discussed its mandate and then perhaps changed it. I am sorry, Madam President, but I really do not think this is a very serious way to proceed. We have addressed these questions in good faith. In principle, we are wanting to move forward, but to do so we need to be clear what it is we are trying to do. So I would support those who have suggested that you convene informal consultations to clarify what it is we are trying to decide on. And then we will try to come back and try to decide on it.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I must confess that not much surprises me in this Conference, and I am quite used to the shifting positions of delegations, but I believe that reasons that we have heard in the past few minutes have set a new benchmark for the kind of twists and turns to which we are becoming more and more accustomed in the Conference on Disarmament. Some delegations wanted to have things their way. The distinguished representative of France has said that developments have taken place since 1992 which make it necessary for France to reconsider its position on the mandate and the ad hoc committee. We would like to know whether France has taken into account these developments when it subscribed to document CD/1434 asking for the immediate re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances. Or are these an afterthought, once we are faced with a moment of truth and we seek to establish the ad hoc committee? I was even more surprised by the response of the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom. I believe that modifications to the Sri Lankan proposal that have been made were designed to accommodate the concerns that were voiced this morning by some of the members of the Western Group. And these modifications were made precisely by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka and by my delegation, with reference to document CD/1434, in which it is stated that the mandates for the ad hoc committees could be updated. But those committees are to be set up immediately. There is no pre-condition in that proposal that those committees cannot be set up while those mandates are being updated. And if there was a dichotomy and contradiction, then I would submit that this arises from the position of the Western Group and not from the proposal of the distinguished Representative of Sri Lanka, or my own delegation. It is strange that a decision is vetoed by delegations on grounds that have been put forward in order precisely to accommodate their concerns and considerations, to accommodate their position as they have stated formally in this Conference.

The positions that have been addressed today confirm for my delegation that a certain number of nuclear-weapon States are not prepared to give up their unequal privileges which they hold from the possession of nuclear weapons. They are not prepared to give up their right to threaten non-nuclear-weapon States with the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. They are not prepared to abide by the agreements to which they are parties even in this Conference on Disarmament. They are stepping backwards from the assurances that they have given. Formal statements have been made holding out the threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. And the debate this morning, unfortunately, for my delegation confirmed our worst fears with regards to the positions of these States. We will have to review our own position on the items of our agenda. We will review our position and come back to this Conference in the light of that review to see how we should respond to this new situation.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): I should like to make two points clear after the important statement by the Ambassador of Pakistan. I should first like to say to him, with all the deep respect I have for his position and for him, that I am not sure that he has quite understood a nuance in my statement. I did not say that the mandate and the 1992 decision must be adapted to reflect the new developments that have occurred in the meanwhile. I said that my capital had not yet come to a final decision (continued in English) "if and how" (continued in French) - perhaps I will be understood better in English - that should be done. At the same time, and so that everyone here clearly understands the situation, the commitment entered into by France under document CD/1444 was part of a set of measures. That is why, in the light of today's discussion, my capital wants an opportunity, now that the question being put has been defined, to assess it.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Madam President very briefly, since it is past 1 p.m. I would like to express my delegation's disappointment at the negative replies to the question raised by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka and the manner in which you defined the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on assurances for non-nuclear States.

When we adopted the updated mandate of that Committee in 1992, we established the Committee, which existed for several years, with the approval of the French delegation and all the other delegations, because there was a consensus on the adoption of this decision in accordance with the rules of procedure, and that Committee was re-established several times after 1992. I am surprised that the Western Group asked for the re-establishment of that Committee a few months ago, in September 1996, and I also wonder how it officially adopted that position without having any idea of any particular mandate. It took that position, and we accept that voluntarily. These are bewildering questions; some States might lack the political will to establish or re-establish this committee - I don't know. The delegation of Egypt has doubts on this matter and wishes to express its disappointment. We have been discussing this matter for three hours now and we are going round in circles. We are now resorting to some procedural aspects in order to postpone the adoption of a decision on this matter. The question is clear and does not require further clarification.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Indeed, it is with regret that I take the floor once again this morning, and I have to say that I share the disappointment just expressed by the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt, although perhaps for different reasons. It seems to me that we are faced with a situation that some unfortunately are choosing to interpret in the most negative way possible, and that is indeed regrettable. In fact, it has even led some countries to challenge the treaty obligations and the good faith or bad faith with which they are implemented. This is just really not fair or acceptable. It seems to me that we are in a situation where one set of rules can be applied one day and a different set can be applied the next day. And it seems to me, however, when one defines fairness, we at least need to be consistent. When the question was asked for a decision to appoint a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, over the period of at least two, three months we have been debating this issue there were answers: we are not in a position to take a decision, we do not have our instructions, etc. We respected those responses, and indeed it seems to me that what we have here today is a situation where none has objected to establishing a negative security assurances ad hoc committee. But several delegations have said they are not in a position today to take that decision. So if there is an objection, and if it is recorded as an objection, then that needs to go down as a matter on which the authorities have not yet taken a decision. It is quite simple.

Mr. KREID (Austria): We have also come to a conclusion from this debate which does not completely coincide with the interpretation given by the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan. We also fully share his sense of frustration and disappointment because evidently we are under time-pressure and he, like others, would have liked to come to a decision on one of the items under discussion. However, I do want to repeat what has just been stated by the distinguished representative of the United States, namely, there have been no formal objections. There is an element of time, there is an element of consultations with capitals, and I believe that this ought to be respected; and I also trust that we will be able to move on this item in the near future. I do want to register that from the side of those delegations from the Western Group that took the floor this morning and now also during the afternoon. We have not had any objections on substance, but we did not want to be rushed into something that might be reprimanded by capitals. And we wanted to make sure, as is the tradition here in the Conference, that what we decide is plainly known to us and to our superior authorities.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): When the proposal was made yesterday, it was for the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee. Then a question was asked by a delegation or two with regard to the mandate. Now we have covered that aspect. And we have actually gone a step further to accommodate the views of the Western Group, which was favorably disposed towards re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on NSA. And I believe that the position of that Group has not changed. With regard to the position of France, I respect what was stated, namely that France was not in a position to agree upon the proposal today. I myself remember last week saying that I have had no instruction from the capital with regard to landmines. And taking into consideration the fact we all have to consult our capitals with regard to new decisions. And if a delegation asks for time, I think we have to concede to them and permit them to have consultations and obtain instructions. And once again, I sincerely believe that, since this proposal comes from that particular delegation and it accommodates the position of that delegation with regard to the mandate, I really do not see any problem with regard to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee with the proposed mandate. The question is what are we going to do next and how are we going to do it. I hope we will be able to use the remaining few minutes to consider those aspects.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka. It is now 1.15 and I should like to ask speakers kindly to be as brief as possible because I still have four speakers on my list. I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria): Madam President, we had kept quiet, believing that silence is golden and that you may be able to walk your way through these procedural difficulties. But it seems that, in statements made which alluded to a decision of yesterday, the length of time it took to arrive at that decision is being used to justify what seems to us another blockage. APLs came to this house five months ago, NSA has been effectively in this house for years and what was proposed or what is being proposed is indeed what was known. What we have gone through before was to lift language from a Western Group document. Unless, of course, there has been a radical shift in position between September 1996 and June 1997? If that is the case, we want it to be stated clearly. Thirdly, there is a difference between APLs and the issue of security assurances. Therefore, we do not accept the statement that, when it was convenient for certain delegations, they used the assertion that they were waiting for instructions. We do not accept that argument, because APLs came to the CD for the first time this year as far as we are concerned. And from the records available here, NSA has been with us for years.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): I will be brief, Madam President, and I thank you for giving me the floor again. First, my delegation is not disappointed. We did not expect positive replies to the seven or eight questions that the representative of Sri Lanka asked; it was not logical to expect that. Second, my delegation respects the reasons procedural or of substance that any delegation may have for opposing something. There has been opposition. My delegation hopes that this afternoon we will begin consideration of the second proposal of the distinguished representative of Nigeria and that we don't again get involved in a debate as to whether the Ambassador of Sri Lanka has the right or sufficient wisdom to do what he is doing. So please, I think that these last 15 minutes were very positive. You, Madam President, asked the question, objection was voiced, and that's that. We need to consult further on this subject. Let us go on to the next proposal.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I shall be brief. I am disappointed, and this is perhaps because I do not have the wisdom of the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico, with his long experience. But I cannot disguise the fact that I am disappointed that the Conference has not been able to take a positive decision on a matter on which apparently there is no disagreement. But then, as I said, we continue to be surprised, particularly by the position of certain Powers. I will not speak about fairness, because I think we do not deal with fairness in this Conference. But I must say that we have heard some very strange arguments today and very strange procedural objections which would not bear critical examination. Among other things, I would like to take note of the fact that the demand for linkage has been revived, and not from the Group of 21. And this is, of course, a notable development in our proceedings today. I would like to suggest, Madam President, that we still have six other questions from the proposal of Sri Lanka, but we should reconvene perhaps slightly after 3 p.m. this afternoon and take up those issues and spend as short a time as possible on each of them, so that we can get through those six questions and any others that anyone may wish to pose, so that we can establish the credibility of this Conference and the credibility of those members who question the credibility of this Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Pakistan. The representative of Sri Lanka asked questions and won the support of a large number of delegations, but the debate has shown that there are delegations which are not ready to take decisions today and which need a little time and are asking for informal consultations to be held. There has been a request to continue the plenary this afternoon. I would ask the question whether it would really be effective to resume the plenary this afternoon or whether we should proceed to informal consultations. I call on the representative of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, your question surprises me. There are seven proposals on the table and a delegation has asked this Conference to decide on them before entering into any informal consultations. The stand by that delegation has been supported by a group that constitutes half of this Conference. I cannot see why we should now be asked to enter into informal consultations. We do not agree to that, Madam. We want answers to the questions put by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka. That is to say, we want the Conference to decide on these proposals. Obviously, if there is no agreement on any one of them, we shall have to decide, then, how to proceed. Not before.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico. I am going to suspend this plenary meeting and we will resume it at 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m. and resumed at 3.45 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The 770th plenary meeting is resumed. The debate this morning showed that certain delegations need a little more time to take a decision about the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances. I thought it would be reasonable to hold informal consultations this afternoon so as to avoid a repetition of this morning's situation, but one delegation has asked me to resume the plenary meeting immediately. I am therefore going to ask straight away, one after another, the questions proposed by the representative of Sri Lanka. The second part of the session ends this afternoon and we have to go through all the components of the Sri Lankan proposal. Consequently, I would ask you to be as brief, as precise and as practical as possible in your reactions so that we can move ahead in our work. After consultation, it seems that it would be useful to begin our meeting with the proposals concerning the three special coordinators. Before I ask the first question, the representative of Austria would like to take the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. KREID (Austria): Madam President, in a way, in your wisdom, you anticipated my intervention, so I can be really very brief. Mainly to express our preference, if we proceed now with the list in front of you, to reverse the order and to give us a chance to deal first with issues that might be easier to get an agreement on. So it is simply what you yourself had been proposing, but when I asked for the floor I was not aware you would do it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Austria. So, I will put the questions concerning the appointment of special coordinators. Is there agreement to appoint a special coordinator on the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Is there agreement to appoint a special coordinator on review of the agenda of the Conference?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): The representative of Ireland would like the floor. Ireland has the floor.

Mr. HANNEY (Ireland): Madam, on behalf of this delegation, we congratulate you on your arrival in the office of CD President and on the successes you have already achieved. We would like to thank the Conference for the decision to appoint a Special Coordinator on CD expansion. However, we would recall that at the outset of the current year under the presidency of Ambassador Sun, during his opening statement to the first plenary session of the CD, he did remark that a consensus had emerged on the appointment of a Special Coordinator. So, in fact, today I think the CD is just formally recognizing a consensus which already existed in January 1997. In fact, the problem as we all know is finding someone to fill this vacant slot. We noted yesterday the remarkable speed with which the CD managed to identify a Special Coordinator on APLs, and we congratulate the Australian delegation on the appointment of Ambassador Campbell. However, this remarkable speed is in sharp contrast to the very long delay in filling the coordinatorship on expansion. We would urge the CD that by the opening of the third part of the session in 1997 it have a name for this Special Coordinator. In this context, we note that in regard to some of the other slots that have been proposed for Special Coordinators, names are already swirling around this chamber. And perhaps these slots are close to being filled. So we would urge the CD to take a rapid decision on the appointment of the Special Coordinator on expansion.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Ireland for his statement and I can assure him that I will continue consultations to find the person who can be appointed to this post. I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): In quick consultations, which unfortunately did not include everyone, some delegations, among them my own, exerted strong and effective pressure on the distinguished representative of Austria and he is willing to serve. We congratulate him on this and I formally propose that the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria be the Coordinator on expansion.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Is this proposal acceptable to all delegations?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I congratulate Ambassador Harald Kreid on his appointment and I wish him luck. I give the floor to Ambassador Kreid of Austria.

Mr. KREID (Austria): It is easy: if you start with "A", you have a good chance to be discovered first as a Coordinator. But apart from this, I am told that this is one of the longest, if not the longest, plenary in the history of the CD, but it seems to have been the quickest decision on a Coordinator, because I just heard of it two minutes ago and I was unable to really reflect and consider all the burden that goes with it. However, I tell you frankly, I did not feel that I could say no for the single reason that we are among those countries that were recently accepted in the CD, and I feel it as a kind of a duty and also as a privilege, of course, to be entrusted with this rather difficult question. I would like to thank all of you for the trust you have shown in approving this nomination and I would also like to thank the Ambassador of Mexico; maybe at this moment I can say that in all sincerity, maybe after some experience in this job I will come back with other opinions.

Mr. MANOUSSAKIS (Greece): I was going to ask for the floor to express my full support for the views expressed by the distinguished representative of Ireland on the need of appointing a Special Coordinator, but now, since a decision has been taken, I would like just to wish much success to the Special Coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Greece for his statement. Is there agreement to appoint a Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): My consultations indicate that the candidacy of Ambassador Zahran of Egypt for this post would be acceptable. Is that proposal acceptable to all delegations?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I congratulate Ambassador Zahran and I wish him good luck in his task. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): I am delighted that we have been able to take these three decisions and to nominate two individuals to serve. I would like to propose for the decision on review of the agenda that we also nominate a Special Coordinator today and I should like to suggest that Ambassador Náray of Hungary be nominated to serve in that capacity.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt and then I will come back to the proposal made by the representative of the United States.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): I would like to express my satisfaction at the way these questions have been dealt with, as well as my gratitude to all those who supported my appointment, in my capacity as the representative of Egypt, as the Special Coordinator to increase the effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament. In fact, the Egyptian delegation would have welcomed the assignment of this task to any other Ambassador. However, I was called upon to undertake it. I will carry out my tasks with the cooperation of all my colleagues. We need to look at the procedures and how we can improve the effectiveness of the Conference in future in order to avoid crises within the Conference with regard to its work. I will undoubtedly benefit from the previous work done on this subject because, since 1995, the question of improving the effectiveness of the Conference has not been taken up. I thank you, Madam President, and all my colleagues who have expressed confidence in me. I promise you that I will cooperate with you in an objective and impartial manner on this matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, for his statement. We have a proposal made by the representative of the United States of America for the appointment as Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda of Ambassador Náray of Hungary. Is that proposal acceptable to all delegations?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I congratulate Ambassador Náray on his appointment. I wish him good luck in his task and give him the floor.

Mr. NÁRAY (Hungary): I have just arrived in the room and I see that things develop quite fast today and yesterday. Of course, I am honoured by this very interesting task, and I shall certainly try to do my best in order to maintain the momentum with which we have started now. And therefore, with your help, hopefully I can do this job.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Náray for his statement. I hope that the spirit of cooperation that now prevails will continue. I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Ms. GHOSE (India): This time I will speak, having ceded the floor earlier, because, apart from congratulating the three Ambassadors who have just been appointed as Special Coordinators, I think I need to spell out, on behalf of my delegation, something on the mandate for the three Coordinators, just some suggestions that we would like to put before them.

On the issue of the expansion of the CD, we feel that the Special Coordinator should also look at the structure and effectiveness of the CD. I know that there is a Special Coordinator to look after the improved and effective functioning of the CD as it now exists, but we would like Ambassador Kreid to bear this in mind when looking at the idea of expansion.

The second point which I would like to make, and this is the suggestion, is that we have in the last expansion treated all the countries who had applied as a group. I think it would be, in my view, more helpful if we did it on an individual basis of individual countries. We have also in the past talked about the need for a balance in the CD and I think that that is also a necessary point to be borne in mind by the Special Coordinator.

On the agenda, we had already agreed and given Ambassador Hocine Meghlaoui a mandate about updating the agenda. This year, as you are aware, we have adopted last year's agenda. But what I would like to say is that, in the refining and updating of the agenda, the priorities of the CD need to be kept in mind. We do not expect to see an updating which would ignore the priorities which have already been established, but anything which is out of date would certainly have to be looked at.

On the third Special Coordinator, I would ask the Ambassador of Egypt to be kind enough to look at how we can have a better seating arrangement in this room. Frankly, I think a lot of our problems this year have arisen from the fact that we are not talking to each other at all. Not that when we talk to each other we get very far, but I think that there is something to be said about this room not being terribly conducive to negotiating. We are supposed to be a negotiating body, and I think this is one issue. It is quite serious: we keep saying we should go to Room 1 when we have something serious to discuss. But we know that Room 1 is too small now for us, so we would have to make use of this chamber with interpretation, but find a way in which we retain our character of being a negotiating body.

That is all I want to say at the moment. I am not quite sure whether there is a need to give specific mandates. I just made these proposals in the hope that the Special Coordinators would bear them in mind when they start their work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of India for her important and pertinent suggestions. Since there are no further speakers on the list, I will ask the Conference the question is there agreement to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space? I would recall in this connection that the most recent mandate adopted by the Conference on Disarmament for this Committee is to be found in document CD/1125. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Indeed, much like the subject this morning on the issue of negative security assurances, my delegation has some questions about this particular proposal. We have some concerns about the mandate. The proposal we at least sent back to Washington last night did not include a mandate, although we did indicate it was possible the question would be put with the old mandate and I do indeed have instructions to seek some changes in the mandate. So I am not in a position today to agree to re-establish this ad hoc committee and I would hope that you could initiate some consultations so that we could come to some kind of an agreement on what an appropriate mandate would be.

I would like to briefly explain what the concerns of my delegation are. In our view, there are no weapons in outer space, and there is no arms race in outer space, and therefore no need to prevent one. This really has been our consistent position since this ad hoc committee was first established and we think it would be timely, perhaps, to correct the mandate and the title if we are looking at what such an ad hoc committee might do in the future. So, regrettably, my delegation is not in a position today to agree to re-establish this ad hoc committee, but I would hope that consultations could lead us to a point where this decision could be taken later.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I have heard with interest the statement that has just been made by the distinguished representative of the United States. I believe that, unlike this morning, she has stated clearly that she will require changes in the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space. My delegation too would be interested to see whether it may be necessary to update the mandate of a committee on outer space. We have some very specific concerns with regard to the work of this committee which we shall also wish to bring to the table when the consultations are held on this subject.

I would therefore suggest, Madam President, that as far as the negative security assurances are concerned we will be, of course, waiting for further word from those of our colleagues who asked for time this morning to examine the proposal that was made by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka and the question which you had put to the Conference.

Secondly, we would be prepared to have consultations on the updating of the mandate of the committee on outer space, which has been indicated by the United States, and we hope that, on these two issues, on which we are perhaps closer to agreement than several of the other matters, we will be able to proceed as soon as possible to decisions. If not today, at least at the outset of the resumed session, and I hope that all of us would be in a position to come to a decision at that time on these two issues.

I would see that on the other remaining issues the positions are perhaps more well known and perhaps more divergent, and therefore rather than proceeding with the item-by-item consideration as we have been doing so far, and displaying the same flexibility which we have accepted this afternoon in response to the proposal that you made and was endorsed by the distinguished Ambassador of Austria, my delegation would be prepared to defer consideration of the other items in order to maintain the good atmosphere which has displayed itself this afternoon and to allow you, Madam President, to conduct or resume the consultations on the two issues which we have discussed at the outset of our resumed session.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): For our part, we are supportive of the re-establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. The mandate was referred to in document CD/1125. In fact, we kept insisting in the past that the mandate cannot be confined to the confidence- and security-building measures. Surely, the confidence- and security-building measures in the military field in outer space should be taken into consideration while the Conference on Disarmament would negotiate the conclusion of an international agreement or agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space, which remains the fundamental task of the Ad Hoc Committee in conformity with the latest resolution adopted by the General Assembly, that is 51/44. So, we emphasize the necessity of dealing with this matter even if there are no space vehicles that are carrying now, at this particular moment, any missiles or any military equipment, but we reaffirm the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space from now on, and the readiness of all States to contribute to that common objective in conformity with, and I have to make that reference very clear to everybody, an international instrument which we have negotiated together which refers, in its provisions, to this question, that is the Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

So, my country was one of those which championed this issue before and we are and we have always been one of the co-sponsors of this draft resolution and we have participated in the past in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and we are willing to cooperate with others, including the distinguished delegate of the United States, for that common and noble objective, which would give assurances to all humanity that there will be no attack or dangers which would come from outer space, the nearest way to target any place in any country all over the globe.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): The subject of prevention of an arms race in outer space has been something in which our delegation has been involved with the delegation of Egypt for a long time, and the Conference too has been spending considerable time on this particular matter in the past few years. There is a saying that prevention is better than cure. Indeed, it may be true that there are no weapons in outer space and that there is no arms race in that domain. But the fact remains that only a decade ago outer space was indeed considered as an area which should be weaponized and there was, indeed, an arms race in outer space. The situation has changed.

In our normal lives, before the winter comes we take flu shots, and I do not think that we should wait until the winter to think about flu shots; it is better to think about it during the autumn; maybe summer is too early. So, we have no objection to the proposal made that we should look into the mandate once again, and look into the title once again. But I hope that, when we meet in July, we will have time to discuss this subject and decide upon a mandate, and, if necessary, a new title.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): I agree with speakers who have said that we need not prolong our meeting this afternoon unnecessarily. And the approach that you, Madam President, had indicated you wished to take, which, as I interpreted it, being a rather simple-minded person, was that we were going to go through a list of questions to which answers would be given "yeah", "nay", "not ready". I have no problems with that. But I was convinced, given my tremendous scepticism this morning about the value of this exercise, by the eloquence of a number of delegations that we should, in fact, go through all of the questions that are before us and having started down that path, I, having been so convinced this morning, find it hard to stop halfway through the exercise.

For example, as you know, Madam President, Canada in CD/1456 has a proposal to re-establish an Ad Hoc Committee on fissile material production, taking into account the agreement on a mandate already reached in this body, and, since what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, I thought we would be allowed to have that question put by you this afternoon as well. So, with all due respect to other members of the Conference and with a promise from our part to say "yeah", "nay" or "not ready", we would like to see all of the questions put.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Canada and I would like to say that that was also how I understood matters. I give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. WANG (China) (translated from Chinese): I will be very brief in the interest of saving time. With regard to the Ad Hoc Committee on outer space, I would like to emphasize that my delegation has always attached great importance to the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and lent its support in setting up the relevant ad hoc committee to start genuine negotiations. However, as has just been pointed out by the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt, these negotiations cannot be limited to confidence-building measures in outer space. China was a co-sponsor of last year's United Nations General Assembly resolution on outer space. We are of the view that the mandate contained in CD/1125 should be revised in the light of the General Assembly resolution. We are anxiously waiting for the United States to review this issue from the perspective of preventing the weaponization of outer space and to show flexibility as early as possible. In fact, speaking of the weaponization of outer space, it is no longer a question of prevention, rather it is an urgent issue calling for immediate solution. My delegation will participate actively in the consultation on the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on outer space.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I was also going to refer to the General Assembly resolution of which we were a co-sponsor with the delegation of Egypt, but I think what the Ambassador of Egypt said covered most of my points. I am a little puzzled on this particular reaction that we have got to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We had this morning, in the context of the NSAs, referred to the position of the Western Group of last November - and I am not referring to the General Assembly resolution, because there were abstentions, nobody against it; it was adopted, there was no one who voted against the resolution on outer space. My question is, what are we to make of these papers which come as a position of the Western Group that they feel that an ad hoc committee on outer space should be established? This is something which is really puzzling me. I think when we put something down on paper and present it to the Conference to get a CD document number, we are serious about that and we would like to actually discuss that. I can understand, of course, when a delegation needs time for instructions; there is no way we can force any delegation to come to start negotiations on that. I am not insisting on that. I am just puzzled by this.

The concluding point I would like to make is to take up what the distinguished Ambassador of Canada said. I do not think that anybody is shying away from anything. Speaking just for my delegation, we are very happy to go through the entire list of the Sri Lankan proposal as it has been put forward. I have something very substantive, in fact, to say under the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. I have been holding on to that since the beginning of this session and have not had an opportunity to say what we would like to say. So, as far as my delegation is concerned, I have no problems whatsoever with continuing down the line and discussing whatever issues are brought to the floor. But what I would like to ask through you, Madam President, is what we are to make of that position paper of the Western Group. Should we not refer to that? It was an official document, it had a CD number. It was not just a non-paper which was floated, testing out people's views. The document was, of course, called "observations". I accept it was observations, these were not proposals, nor were they suggestions, and we find that today we are not able to take a decision on something which the Western Group appeared to have agreed on. This is a question; I do not know whether I will get an answer and therefore, it will remain a question in my mind.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Although I cannot see the distinguished Ambassador of India, I would be delighted to answer her question. I think that my view is at least that the Western document still stands. We do not table documents we do not stand by. At the same time, I would note that particular paragraph mentions that mandates for the ad hoc committees could be updated. Now, as I think all in this room know, a product of a group negotiation contains a compromise. So this phrase, "the mandates for ad hoc committees could be updated" probably reflects views of those that think it should be and views of those who think it does not need to be. Mine was among those delegations that thought it should be, and thus the phrase "could be updated".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America.

Our discussion has shown that there are some delegations which need more time for consultations on this point. As agreed, I will move on to the next question: Is there agreement to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments? I should like to recall in this connection that the most recent mandate adopted by the Conference on Disarmament for this Committee is to be found in document CD/1150.

I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): My delegation did not support document CD/1434 of 11 September 1996. My delegation has no objection to saying that it is ready to adopt a decision on the establishment of this committee with its old mandate.

Mr. BAALLAL (Algeria) (translated from French): This morning I said that, when my delegation accepted a decision, it would remain silent and that in the opposite case it might have to ask for the floor. To answer your question, Madam President, I would say that this concept of transparency is at present a very vague, imprecise concept of which the content is still unknown. Contrary to what its name implies, this concept of transparency contains a great deal that is obscure. Many questions are still outstanding. What about military holdings and procurement through national production? What about the very latest weapons? What about weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons? And lastly, what about transfers of technology with military applications? At the current stage of definition, or rather lack of definition of this concept, my delegation is not in a position to accept the establishment of an ad hoc committee on transparency. We do not preclude the possibility of discussing this in the Conference on Disarmament and you can make it a subject of your presidential consultations. In saying this, I am fully consistent with two very important facts. The first is that the Ad Hoc Committee that operated in the Conference on Disarmament under the mandate to which you, Madam President, have just referred - CD/1150 - has completed its work and therefore no longer has any reason to exist, since, in accordance with resolution 46/36 L, on the basis of which the mandate was drawn up, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has been asked to prepare a report taking into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament for submission to the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The Conference on Disarmament has done that work and submitted a report. Therefore, for my delegation, the Ad Hoc Committee on transparency has fulfilled its mandate.

The second important point is that the relevant resolution - of which I unfortunately do not have the number - from the most recent session of the United Nations General Assembly merely invites the Conference on Disarmament to consider continuing its work on transparency. My delegation agrees that we can consider discussing that; it does not agree that we should re-establish an ad hoc committee on transparency.

Mr. WANG (China) (translated from Chinese): Again, I will be very brief. The Chinese delegation does not believe it is necessary to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments this year. Firstly, as has been pointed out by our colleague from Algeria, the mandate of the previous TIA Ad Hoc Committee has been fulfilled. It was precisely on that basis that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the relevant resolution. The second reason is that work has already been done in the CD and relevant arrangements, such as the United Nations Register on the transfer of conventional arms, have already been established. The Register is in the process of being implemented and China has taken part in it. Under such circumstances, if the CD continues to seek or explore some abstract or sweeping TIA measures, my delegation does not see any practical meaning in this. My delegation is not against transparency as a matter of principle. We only feel that all transparency measures are in fact treaty-specific. For instance, China, like many other countries, accepts the IAEA safeguards. That in itself constitutes a transparency measure. We have accepted the on-site inspection provision under the CWC. That, of course, is also a transparency measure. Furthermore, China has concluded bilateral or regional multilateral agreements on confidence-building with some neighbouring countries. An important component of these agreements is the transparency measures. For the reasons listed above, I would like to reaffirm my delegation's belief that it is not necessary to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments in this year's session of the CD. Of course, that does not mean that my delegation is not willing to exchange views with interested delegations on this issue. On the contrary, we are quite ready to do so.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China. I have on my list of speakers the representatives of Egypt and the United States of America. After that, I would like to review the other points because there is no consensus on them and they are therefore going to have to be the subject of further consultations. I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): Madam President. The reason for which I am speaking in English is that the documents which I have at my disposal are in English. Otherwise I could have spoken in Arabic, much better than in English.

It happened that maybe I was the most fortunate amongst all colleagues around this table in that I was the first Special Coordinator on TIA in 1992 and I was the first Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments in 1993 and through this experience I became disappointed and frustrated because we thought, Madam President, that when we adopted together in 1991 resolution 46/36 L which lubricated the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, a register which was established where we were pleading that this Register should encompass all weapons and not only seven categories of conventional weapons. We said all weapons without exception, and in particular weapons of mass destruction. So the idea came that, well, let us at least start to establish a register and leave the controversial issues, meaning the stockpiles, national production, the destabilizing accumulation of weapons, the transfer of technology for military purposes and weapons of mass destruction, to the Conference on Disarmament and we will come later in the light of the report of the Conference on Disarmament in 1994 to look at the Register again and to see if we can expand it with the work of the Group of Experts which also made a report in that regard, taking into consideration the report of the Conference on Disarmament, and to see if we can build a body, a mechanism, which would be comprehensive in size to include everything and which would be in fact an early warning in case the accumulation of weapons reached a certain stage that would endanger peace and security, an early warning through the Register. And this is the wisdom behind the whole thing. I wanted just to go back to that history because I lived it personally when we negotiated that resolution 46/36 L in the General Assembly and all through the Conference on Disarmament in 1992 as Special Coordinator, later on as Chairman of that Ad Hoc Committee and as one of the participants in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in this subject matter.

We think transparency should be comprehensive. Transparency should be full, not transparency as far as certain countries are concerned, and not transparency if the matter relates to others. Transparency for everybody and for all things which may endanger peace and security. All weapons, all stockpiles, national production and, in particular, weapons of mass destruction.

Having said this, I want to refer to resolution 51/45 H, which was adopted last year. That resolution, as far as the Conference on Disarmament is concerned, did not recommend the establishment of an ad hoc committee on TIA. It invited the Conference on Disarmament, in its operative paragraph 5, to consider continuing its work undertaken in the field of transparency in armaments. But the whole resolution was related to the Register, to inviting countries to report to the Register the input and output as far as the seven categories of conventional weapons, not more, and also to call on "the Secretary-General with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 1997, ... to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, taking into account the report of the Disarmament Commission at its 1996 session on the subject of international arms transfers, the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the 1994 report of the Secretary-General" on the Register, including the report of the Conference on Disarmament on this subject.

My delegation has no objection to the creation of that ad hoc committee, on TIA, provided that the mandate should be clear, that there should be full transparency encompassing stockpiles, national production, transfer of high technology with military applications and all weapons of mass destruction. If this is transparency, yes, by all means; if not, I am sorry, we are going to go in circles again and this Conference will not produce the required results. This is why, if you look at the programme of work of the Group of 21, you will find that this is a controversial issue, this is one of the controversial issues which we, in the Group of 21, thought that a Special Coordinator should deal with.

I hope that I was clear.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Madam President, at your request I will be brief. I think the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt was very clear. This proposal is one that my delegation supports. We could support the re-establishment of the transparency in armaments Ad Hoc Committee. Indeed, we think it is very important. For us, we believe that conventional weapons constitute a threat to stability in the world and the CD should be addressing this issue. So for us it is important.

This morning our delegations came to the table with the argument that ad hoc committees that we had had before with their old mandates should pose no problem in being re-established and, indeed, that proved not to be the case. I guess we had been somewhat hopeful that perhaps TIA and fissile material cut-off treaty, and we have not discussed that yet, could be among those that would be easier to re-establish than perhaps new issues. We are disappointed, but we hope that through consultations this matter can be resolved.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America for her statement. Since there is no consensus on this matter and delegations need further consultations, I propose to take up the next point. Is there agreement to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with a mandate such as that contained in the document submitted by the Group of 21, CD/1463? I give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. ASOREY BREY (Spain) (translated from Spanish): On behalf of the Western Group, I have to say, without at the moment getting into the substance of the matter, that the Western Group is not in a position to accept the proposal contained in document CD/1463.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Since it was my delegation which had the honour of introducing the text contained in document CD/1463, I feel it is my duty to make it clear that this is not a document of the Group of 21, but a proposal by 26 delegations. Furthermore, I did not very well understand the question put to the Conference. I understood that there are two different proposals. One is that contained in document CD/1462, which is to establish an ad hoc committee for agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", and the other is on the specific mandate for that ad hoc committee. So, Madam President, with all due respect, I would ask you to clarify, or perhaps the Ambassador of Sri Lanka can clarify to what exactly it is that we are being called on to respond at this point.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico. I should like ask the representative of Sri Lanka to answer the representative of Mexico's question. I give him the floor.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): When I made my proposal yesterday, I spoke of the re-establishment of three Ad Hoc Committees as per the proposal made by the Western Group in document CD/1434. I referred to the fact that an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament had not been established, therefore we will have to establish it. A proposal to this effect is contained in CD/1462, as the Ambassador of Mexico very clearly stated. The proposal is clear and it came from the Group of 21, to which Sri Lanka belongs, and it aims at establishing an ad hoc committee for agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". Subsequently, 26 members belonging to that Group have come up with a proposed mandate, so there are two different proposals really. We could first consider the proposal contained in paragraph 1 of CD/1462, and thereafter we can see whether we could go further with regard to the mandate as contained in CD/1463, if that is possible during the course of the day.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his clarifications. I will repeat the question: Is there agreement to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with a mandate such as that contained in the document submitted by the Group of 21, CD/1462, with the clarification given by the representative of Sri Lanka. I give the floor to the representative of India.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Madam President, you've got me a bit lost, because, as I understood it, the question you asked was amended both by the Ambassador of Mexico and by Sri Lanka and therefore the response of the Western Group is to a question which is now amended. Do you still wish me to take the floor? I'm quite happy to do so. But is the Western Group's response to the proposal to have an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with or without the mandate in CD/1463? This would be my question, Madam President, after which I have something more to say. Or maybe I should say it straight away, whatever you wish.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of India. To save time, I would like to have the answer to my second question. The representative of India has the floor again.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Well, clearly, Madam President, since India is a member of the Group of 21, we support the establishment of an ad hoc committee. India is also one of the sponsors of the proposed mandate for an ad hoc committee for nuclear disarmament contained in CD/1463, and so clearly, we would also support this particular type of mandate. Now, I would like to take a little time here. We have, and I would like to recall to the Conference that we have not just at this session, but for some time, been emphasizing the need, and I would say this is since 1994, but those who've been here longer would perhaps be able to correct me. We have been asking for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and, we have consistently not been receiving any kind of response except negative, that you will not get an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

We talked of priorities this morning. As far as India is concerned, this is our priority in the CD. We do not have any other priorities. This does not mean, as I said in my statement whenever I made it, that we are not willing to discuss other subjects, but our priority, and that was shown when we did not object to the issue on landmines, remains nuclear disarmament. We cannot accept that the Conference on Disarmament, today in 1997, is not in a position to agree to discuss nuclear disarmament. I have been looking at all the papers which have been presented earlier, and I find that even in the proposal of the Canadian delegation, a mechanism was suggested. Last year, when the President was undertaking consultations on this specific issue, several presidents had come down to a mechanism, but we never got off from there. If we are not going to discuss nuclear disarmament, I don't know what we're doing here. We're really playing games.

Let me, for a moment, get back to the proposed mandate, and I would like to emphasize that this is a proposed mandate. The way we see the ad hoc committee is that it will take into account all the different proposals that have come forward from all over the world, whether it be from the Canberra Commission, the Stimson Center, the Pugwash Committee, from members of the Conference on Disarmament, concerning a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and this is what we feel the ad hoc committee must address. In the paper, we have seen three clear aspects of the work that the ad hoc committee should in fact undertake. And the first would be an agreement committing all States to the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Now this commitment is something which we have been asking for for some time. We have been told it is there already in the NPT context. We know what happened to NPT commitments in the past, and there is nothing in what is happening in the present which makes us believe that that implementation would change. After all, article VI was there from day one of the NPT, that is since 1968, and the increase of the number of weapons took place despite article VI. Of course now, if we are asked to believe that because of article VI they are going to decrease, that strains our credulity a bit. So we need a commitment at this point, and there is no better place where such a commitment can be negotiated than in the Conference on Disarmament and in an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. And the second sector which we feel the ad hoc committee should look at would be a phased programme, and here we are working on what I already mentioned, that there are suggestions and proposals which have come in from all over the world. And also from 28 members of this Conference. A phased programme with time-frames which would lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We have also suggested that this ad hoc committee should set up a working group on a convention on the prohibition of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices which would take into account the Shannon Report as well as the various views that have been expressed on this subject.

Let me, for a minute, tell you what our position is. I will just repeat what I have already said in plenary. I have said that it is our conviction, it is India's conviction that many of the issues which have been raised, which today constitute grey areas of the Shannon Report, and which appear even more grey after two years, that these can be clarified if we adopt a clear work programme that places the mandate for a fissile material cut-off treaty firmly within a multilateral nuclear disarmament process. India remains convinced that a fissile material cut-off treaty can be a useful and necessary step - but as part and parcel of a negotiated, phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons. I just quoted that again to say that we are not against discussing fissile material cut-off, despite whatever is being said outside this chamber or to the press, but we do see that this discussion should take place within the context of this ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This is probably the most important issue to us; not "probably", it is the most important issue to us. So I will not apologize for taking a little more time than I perhaps should.

For us, our being here in the CD is because we feel this is the forum where nuclear disarmament is to be negotiated; otherwise, as I said, the other issues are not of priority to us. We have talked about, and I believe yesterday afternoon when unfortunately I was not here, a separate issue was raised on fissile material cut-off by the Ambassador of Germany and perhaps Austria. For us, fissile material cut-off is in this context. We believe that this issue needs to be addressed, but it can only make sense if it will not be only a non-proliferation, unequal treaty like its precursor, the CTBT - and I think all my colleagues around this table know our attitude toward the CTBT. It will only make sense if it is in such a phased programme. And I think that the proposal we have made in CD/1463 - it does not reflect totally India's position, I must say, it is a group position - but the thrust of what is contained here is what we are prepared to discuss, what we are prepared to look at and it is extremely serious. This is not a rhetorical, if I might use the word, filibustering kind of statement. I am making a substantive point here, and that substantive point is whether we are really serious about disarmament, whether we are really serious about looking at weapons of mass destruction - we have talked about, we have dealt with chemical weapons and we are dealing with, or will be dealing with biological weapons, and we are not, the CD is not to look at nuclear weapons. We are told: if you discuss it here, you will stop the discussions which are taking place at a bilateral level. Not at all! Why should it? Is it in our interest to stop something which we support, that is, the continuous reduction of nuclear weapons held by the two biggest possessors of nuclear weapons? Not at all. But they take it phase by phase in time-frames for their security. But we have our security. We do not belong to any military alliance which gives us security through nuclear weapons; our security is a genuine issue and we're bringing the issue of our security to the CD. And we're saying this is of concern to us, we would like to negotiate this. I think the fact of our seriousness is demonstrated, can be measured by the fact that we have not only signed but ratified the CW, we have opened all our stocks to inspection, all without reservation. So that the international community can go and check. We will bind ourselves to the most stringent regime provided there is an elimination of nuclear weapons by all States.

At the risk of repeating myself, this is a very serious issue to us; I am not playing games. For us, we agree that a fissile material cut-off treaty can be a very useful step. We are willing to discuss and update - to use the flavour-of-the-month word - update the mandate. But it has to be located in a phased programme which is going to lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons; otherwise why are we doing this? So, I am not disappointed, I am outraged, that our serious proposal is dismissed by one sentence from the Western Group that they do not accept the Sri Lankan proposal, which is the G-21 proposal on a nuclear disarmament ad hoc committee. I am outraged that we will not discuss our security concerns. All right then, let us hear that clear. That we are not willing to discuss your security concerns. We will go away, quite happily. Is that what we have just been told by the representative of the Western Group? That is all for the moment, Madam President. I may come back to this, but I can assure you that on the essentials my position is not likely to change.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): Madam President, the answer to the question which you have put to us, as far as my delegation is concerned, is positive, is affirmative. Yes, we plead for the establishment of an ad hoc committee for agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". If we really are serious about negotiating disarmament agreements, the highest priority and the utmost, absolute priority for Egypt - and it is also for the rest of the Group of 21, as our Coordinator mentioned time and again in the morning, and it has been repeated by my colleagues, yes, it is the highest priority - a concern of ours, as we have mentioned several times here and in New York and elsewhere, in the NPT conference and the Preparatory Committee for the Conference of the year 2000, and the utmost priority is the concern that article VI, reference to which was made yesterday, has remained unimplemented since 1968 although it speaks of the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament "at an early date". 1968!

That is why we were convinced by those protagonists so that we later on ratified that Treaty - with the objective that the Treaty would lead us to the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Again, I have to refer to the latest NPT Review and Extension Conference of 1995 when we raised our concern about this question, when we were not ready to accept an indefinite extension of the NPT: the lubricator, that is, the decision on "Principles and objectives" which we negotiated mentioned the question of the elimination of nuclear weapons in phases, the phased elimination of nuclear weapons to be negotiated. We welcome any step bilateral or plurilateral to reduce nuclear weapons, but at the multilateral level it is here, this is the forum. And this was the understanding when we accepted the principles and objectives contained in decision 2 of the NPT Conference in 1995. Madam President, in light of that, yes, this is our utmost priority. This is what our Coordinator said and this is the wisdom behind mentioning that at the top of the list of the programme of work of the Group of 21 contained in CD/1462.

As for the mandate, we can look at it, but we have several papers on the mandate. We cannot fail to agree on a mandate if there is a political will to discuss the establishment of an ad hoc committee to deal with this matter of the highest priority to us and to the international community, which was referred to in SSOD-I, that document which was adopted by consensus in 1978. SSOD-I, I wanted to remind everybody of this sacred number, SSOD-I.

Egypt had the honour and pleasure to submit on behalf of 28 countries on 8 August last year a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons which contains three phases and would go through to the year 2020. And in the first phase, I would like to remind the distinguished Ambassador of Canada and our colleagues, in the first phase there is the cut-off. Here we are. There is an opportunity to seize. We have then to establish an ad hoc committee with a mandate where, according to our Programme of Action, in the first phase there is the cut-off. We are serious. And I wanted to refer to decision No. 2 on principles and objectives, where the cut-off is mentioned and also the negotiations on a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Read them together. And you can deal with the cut-off within the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

You have several papers here, we can look at them. There is a paper presented by Egypt; this is CD/1453, which contains a draft mandate for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We can look at it. And Egypt is also a co-sponsor with 26 other member States belonging to this Conference and belonging to the G-21 of CD/1463. We have not said that this is a sacred document, but we can look at it in order to find an agreement by consensus on a mandate to advance our work on nuclear disarmament, having in mind the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The cut-off issue is for us a measure of disarmament and this is why it was mentioned in the decision on principles and objectives and this is why, when we negotiated together the report of the Special Coordinator for cut-off, Ambassador Shannon, we referred to that and we did not agree on his report except with reference to that. So, we are serious - let us go ahead, consider the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to deal with item one of the agenda, where we also have to address seriously the question of cut-off.

Mr. BAIDI-NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): It was a matter of surprise for my delegation that we heard a very quick and straightforward objection from the Coordinator of the Western Group to the proposal of the G-21 on agenda item 1. We have really spent so many hours in the G-21 bringing about a compromise position on this agenda item, which has been identified as a high priority by the international community. However, to be absolutely clear, since there could be some confusion about the exact answer and the exact question, can I kindly, through you, get a confirmation from the Western Group and the Coordinator of the Western Group that the Western Group objects to the establishment of an ad hoc committee for the issues under agenda item 1?

Mr. KREID (Austria): Indeed, I have been listening with great attention to what has been said, and we are quite aware that each of the countries represented here has their very clear and understandable security interests. I think this has been presented in a convincing and persuasive manner. I will refrain from speaking about the security interests of my own country. I only want to limit myself to one point. And the point is the following: I think in previous discussions, when we talked about the approach, it became obvious to many of us that it would be difficult to proceed in a comprehensive manner, so to speak, from point one of a reduction calendar until we reach point, or target, zero.

Now, for this very reason it seems to me we have been working on an approach which would single out certain issues and deal with them individually or, so to speak, in a "piecemeal" fashion without, however, losing sight of the overall goal and target. And we have just been spending many hours this morning on one of these issues which is listed in the first phase of the programme of action which the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt has made reference to, a suggestion of the G-21 from last August, namely the question of negative security assurances. And in the same, in the very same phase, that is first phase between 1996 and the year 2000, we also find the reference to a treaty banning the production of fissile material. So, my point is really, we ought to be consistent, and I do not see why we cannot deal with the item of cut-off in an equal manner in which we proceed to deal with the NSA question, namely, on its own merits. And not in the broad context, much as we would like to be able to do it; we are persuaded that for the time being we will not be very productive in continuing along these lines.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Before I speak, I would, I think, be assisted if the distinguished representative of Spain, on behalf of the Western Group, were to be able to respond to the precise question that has been posed by the distinguished representative of Iran. I would like to take the floor immediately afterwards.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Pakistan. I call on the representative of Spain, in his capacity as the Coordinator of the Western Group, to answer the question that has been asked.

Mr. ASOREY BREY (Spain) (translated from Spanish): My earlier statement was a concrete response to a concrete question that you asked us and that referred to document CD/1463. I listened very attentively to the question of the representative of Iran as I also listened to the statement by the Ambassador of India, and I have to say that the concerns and worries that she expressed and that other representatives have also expressed are perfectly understandable. But what we had to do here this afternoon was to fulfil the task you set us of replying to the concrete questions asked by the representative of Sri Lanka. I think that it is appropriate to be brief and direct in one's replies in order to avoid situations which you yourself did not want to recur as occurred this morning. Just as I responded earlier to a concrete question referring to a concrete document I would like now, to be equally clear. In this regard, I have to say, as Coordinator of the Western Group, that it is my duty to state that our group is not in a position to accept the proposal for the creation of a committee on nuclear disarmament as contained in document CD/1463, nor as it is outlined in document CD/1462. I think that with that I have answered the question from Iran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): I heard the answer of the Coordinator of the Western Group and he referred only to two documents. He did not refer to a third document which my delegation made reference to, that is CD/1453. There is also another mandate. We wanted to know how far we can go in this direction. There is another mandate which was submitted earlier by my delegation in document CD/1453; while in the meantime my delegation has also become co-sponsor of CD/1463, I wanted also to know if there is any reaction on the part of the Western Group, the Eastern Group, the Group of One, on CD/1453. This is just for clarification, because later on we will hear some comments on the position of the Western Group.

The PRESIDENT (*translated from French*): I thank the representative of Egypt, but I believe that the question put by Sri Lanka did not include the document you have mentioned, Mr. Ambassador. If we wish to make progress, I would suggest that we hear the speakers on the list and draw conclusions on the question put by the representative of Sri Lanka. I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I would like to express on behalf of the Pakistan delegation our deep disappointment at the dismissal of the proposal of the Group of 21, as well as the proposal of the 26 delegations with regard to nuclear disarmament, by the representative of the Western Group. This dismissal of the demands and aspirations of the majority of the membership of this Conference is a reflection of the reasons why this single multilateral negotiating body has been in an impasse for the past several months.

It is the position of some nuclear-weapon States that they can retain nuclear weapons for an indefinite period of time because they are necessary for their security. We do not believe at this moment, at the end of the cold war, that any of the nuclear-weapon States face threats either from each other or from other States that would require them to retain nuclear weapons. On the contrary, it is the retention of nuclear weapons by a few States that poses an overriding threat to global security and impedes the process of multilateral, regional and bilateral disarmament. As far as my delegation is concerned, the absence of nuclear disarmament has also come to pose an obstacle to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in our own region, and therefore we cannot remain indifferent to the fate of proposals for nuclear disarmament within this single, multilateral negotiating body.

If we take this decision of rejection by the Western Group together with the position that was taken this morning with regard to negative security assurances, we are faced with a serious question that impinges on our own security in multifarious ways. In that context, our own positions with regard to several other items for disarmament become extremely complicated. We would therefore continue to urge the nuclear-weapon States, or at least those of them which have opposed disarmament negotiations in this body, and we would appeal to those members of the Western Group who depend on nuclear protection and some of those who have nuclear weapons stationed on their soil, to look beyond their own conditions and look to the threat which is faced by non-nuclear-weapon States which do not enjoy the privileges of the nuclear umbrella. In this context, the proposal for the so-called cut-off treaty also emerges as an unequal proposal. I would like to clarify that for my delegation the so-called cut-off has never been a cut-off, it has always been a proposal for a treaty on nuclear disarmament. That is a position which was espoused by my delegation and by many other delegations, including the lead sponsor of the proposal, which was Canada, for many years: that the fissile materials convention would be a convention that would provide not only for a halt in production, but also for the progressive reduction of stockpiles so that we would achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament.

That objective was thrown out of the window at a certain point in time by certain Powers. We cannot accept that. We have always insisted that a cut-off is not sufficient, and the fact that people continue to insist on just a cut-off is insufficient to meet the security concerns of my country. We will therefore continue to insist that the so-called fissile materials convention should be a measure for disarmament, and being a measure for disarmament, we have joined together with the 26 delegations in proposing that this item, this issue, should be dealt with under the item on nuclear disarmament and in the framework of the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This is the position which has been taken by my delegation. It is in the documents. And I hope that our position is sufficiently clear for all delegations.

Mr. DUARTE (Brazil): When we started having today's debate, we were asked to reply to a series of questions about the possible adoption of certain procedures or mechanisms, but the turn of the debate shows that the relationship between what seemed like procedural decisions and substantive ones is very narrow, and we have really engaged in substantive discussions of a very important nature. And that requires a statement from my delegation to put on record the position that we take on this issue.

Of course, Brazil subscribes to the proposals contained in CD/1462 and CD/1463. We have participated in that. I also would like to recall that just yesterday the permanent representative of Brazil, Ambassador Lafer, announced the decision of the Government of Brazil to submit to Congress the accession of Brazil to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. On that occasion, we made a statement regarding the spirit and the rationale behind this decision of the Government of Brazil, and we stressed the importance that we attached to the fulfilment of the commitment contained in article VI of that treaty, and we also recalled the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice about the need to engage in serious negotiations about the elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is therefore clear that this is the spirit in which Brazil is taking this decision and proposing to its parliament the accession of Brazil to this important international treaty. We are, therefore, very disappointed about the reaction given to the proposal that has been submitted to the Conference today. We in the Group of 21 have considered that this was a constructive and comprehensive proposal. It also encompasses the issue of cut-off. The Government of Brazil has showed a very open and flexible position with regard to this issue in the past, and we continue to consider that also as an important issue, but we also believe that it has to be taken from the point of view of disarmament as well. And in that respect, I think that the proposal of the Group of 21 contained in this document was sufficiently comprehensive. This is the position that I want to put on record on behalf of my delegation.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I am sorry to take the floor again on this subject, but I did want to reply to the specific point raised by Ambassador Kreid of Austria. The reason why the G-21 - and I'm not speaking on behalf of the G-21, but as a member and a participating member - why we had suggested a separate ad hoc committee on NSAs was because there is a separate agenda item for it. I wish our programme of action was the agenda for the CD. Unfortunately, it is not. The agenda for the Conference that we have adopted by consensus has an agenda item 4, which deals with NSAs, and for that we suggested the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee to discuss it.

We also have agenda item 1, which has also been adopted by consensus and that item is "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". And we are suggesting very consistently an ad hoc committee be established to deal with this subject. It is not a question of our being selective. To a certain extent, yes, I suppose we could have had an ad hoc committee on new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, radiological weapons, under agenda item 5. We could have, but what we have done is, what was priority for us, we have put it here. And that is the answer to the specific question.

On the issue of fissile material cut-off, which Ambassador Kreid raised - and I'm being very careful in what I say - we see this as a part of a phased programme which would lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons, a phased programme of disarmament. We are not saying that our programme of action of the G-28, should be the programme; it is a basis on which we can start discussions. But so far, since we tabled it there has been no effort to even discuss our programme of action. When, on 14 March 1996, the G-21 asked for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and we put in a mandate, a very brief mandate, it was not discussed. All right, we were very busy discussing something else. Then we were asked, well, you want an ad hoc committee, what should the Ad Hoc Committee discuss? And we came out with a programme of action. And that, too, was not discussed.

If we are going to knock nuclear disarmament off the agenda of the CD, I do not know how long the interest of a large number of our countries will remain in this forum. We have been told from many of the countries of the Western Group, that, if you don't agree with us, the CD will fold up. Words to that effect. If the CD does not discuss nuclear disarmament, it does not matter if it does fold up. The overall effort that we have seen, and not just in the CD, is somehow to get nuclear disarmament off the international agenda. That is something we cannot agree to. We will not agree with that. And therefore we have to take a view on how we are going to deal with a subject on which some of us have such strong feelings - and they are not just feelings: they are, as all the delegations of the G-21 have mentioned, or most of them who have spoken, matters relating to their security, and if that is not considered important enough, then what are we doing here? We are not here to participate in discussions about other people's security; they don't want us to discuss that in any case. But we are told that this is our security and you must do this for our security.

No, I think that we really have reached an important stage. I do not wish to stop anything just now but, as I said, I am more than disappointed; I am disappointed that from the entire Western Group and the entire Eastern Group - I'm not mentioning the Group of One because I know the Group of One's position on this - but the entire Western Group and the entire Eastern Group have dispensed with what the G-21 has repeatedly said is its top priority with one curt sentence: "We do not accept." All right, if that is what is going to happen, there are lots of things which we cannot accept also. And I think we will then perhaps have to take a long breath, a very deep breath, and see whether we are here to promote cooperation, or whether we are here to promote the issuing of orders by one group so that the rest of us ultimately are beaten down to saying, "OK, we will accept." If that is where we are going, I feel more than disappointed. But the reason I'm taking the floor was really to reply to Ambassador Kreid.

Mr. BAIDI-NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Normally when we have so many papers, we have confusions. I listened very carefully to the statement of the distinguished representative of Spain as the Coordinator of the Western Group, and I heard him state that his Group cannot agree with the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. He rightly pointed out that the basis of the decision should be the proposal by Sri Lanka. And I heard the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka was referring to the suggestion for the establishment of an ad hoc committee not on nuclear disarmament, but for agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament." So, we have heard no objection to that proposal and it is not expected that the Western Group would oppose such a suggestion, because then it is meant that the Western Group is really opposing the establishment of an ad hoc committee on agenda item 1 even to negotiate cut-off, while we know that the cut-off should be negotiated under agenda item 1. So I think that still the suggestion by the Group of 21 is on the table and we hope that in the inter-sessional period we could have some more consultations on that proposal.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): I will be as brief as my concern permits. We have heard from the distinguished representative of Spain a flat rejection, an absolute, unreasoned rejection of the proposal contained in document CD/1462 regarding the establishment of a committee for agenda item 1 and an equally flat, laconic rejection of the mandate contained in document CD/1463. In contrast to what was said on the establishment of other machinery, where it was stated that further consultations were needed or time for reflection was needed or it was necessary to seek instructions, on nuclear disarmament we have heard from the Coordinator of the Western Group a categorical no, what my Spanish friend would call a slap in the face.

This would be very serious if we were to take it literally as it appears, but the distinguished delegate of Spain will allow me not to believe him. I don't believe him because I have some documents before me. I have here a document dated 15 May, document CD/1456 from Canada, which speaks of that friendly country's views on the agenda and programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament and in the second paragraph it says: (continued in English) "The CD must address nuclear disarmament; it should establish a mechanism for the substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues with a view to identifying if and when one or more issues should be the subject of negotiation." (continued in Spanish) I have here what an eminent member of the Western Group says. I am sure that it was not the intention of the delegation of Canada to close the door on us laconically as has been done today. I also have here what was said yesterday by our distinguished friend, Hisami Kurokochi of Japan. I will read it: (continued in English) "Beyond the CTBT and FMCT, as an agenda for the international community as a whole, we should continue our efforts to find appropriate and possible issues for negotiations in the CD in the field of nuclear disarmament. It could be done by appointing a special coordinator, as my delegation proposed during the first session." (continued in Spanish) Obviously the "no" is not as categorical as it seemed, and we still have some hope; I welcome that fact, because if we didn't have that hope, this Conference would have lost its *raison d'être*.

Of course, I do not envy the coordinators to be appointed today their task because, if we are not going to talk about nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, I don't know what the coordinator on the agenda is going to do; if we don't have an agenda, I don't know what the coordinator on functioning is going to work on because we are not in a functioning Conference, and I don't know what the coordinator on expansion is going to do, because what's the use of our expanding the Conference if its not going to do anything? Of course, God forbid that I should be establishing linkages. We all know that the countries members of the Group of 21 cannot establish linkages. For them, linkages have been demonized, although for others they are coming to be sanctified. I am not establishing linkages, but it seems to me that there is a linkage when someone says in the Conference on Disarmament, "everything but nuclear disarmament, anything but nuclear disarmament". Let's take the weapon that is in vogue, whichever it may be, whether it has an impact on global and international security or not so long as we don't talk about nuclear disarmament.

I will tell you where that course will lead us: we will end up submitting to the First Committee this year a report saying: "The Conference spoke, the members of the Conference also had lunch, special coordinators were appointed, and on no item was it possible to reach even the slightest agreement on beginning any negotiations." Is that what we want? Certainly, with rejections such as we have heard today, that is where we are leading, because you know, Madam President, categorical and laconic rejections are contagious.

Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria): I shall be very brief. But, in brevity, we think it is important to look at the origin and history of this particular forum and to see what it has done especially regarding nuclear issues. This forum negotiated NPT, the non-proliferation measure to which Nigeria is a party. It negotiated CTBT, another non-proliferation measure which the

Government of Nigeria is studying. In almost 40 years of existence through various expansions, it has not been allowed to negotiate on the most singular important weapon mankind has ever evolved. When we go to the history of armament, we know that the sub-machine gun is under 125 years old. Nuclear weapons are approaching 50. So what would be a more fitting present to the twenty-first century than to address the issue of a weapon system that can change civilization? It has been argued that a nuclear weapon is a hypothetical weapon. Hiroshima is not hypothetical. Chernobyl is not hypothetical. The consequences of this - of even leakage - we know. It is not a weapon system that perhaps technology can make obsolete. Indeed, technology only improves it and, with the improvement, its ability to kill massively, to distort civilizations, to destroy the environment. If we are worried about punching the ozone layer, are we not perhaps worried about perhaps handing over to unborn generations deformities?

We are members of nation States and nation States, of course, come and go, they will change, they contract, they expand, blocs are formed. But nuclear weapons in the possession of certain States are inherently unstable and destabilizing. Those who have possession want to keep it. Others have been asked not to have it because, supposedly, they are the underdogs or because they are supposed to run or operate on unstable political systems. But the same instability which occurs in the so-called developing countries can also mar developed countries. We have seen it in history - I am sorry to refer to western Europe. Extreme regimes can come into the possession of nuclear weapons and then we can see what can happen. So, to come back to today and the CD, the appeal for a committee is not new this year. I mean, I have now been in the CD for three years and I met it on the ground. Certain delegations were persuaded in 1995 to let the Ad Hoc Committee on the Comprehensive Test Ban continue to work. And this year again we are told it is an absolute no - despite the fact that we know that even within the Western Group and as quoted by Ambassador de Icaza, there are differences of opinion.

Shying away from discussing the issue of nuclear disarmament is like playing the ostrich burying its head in the sand. The problem will not go away. It will be here. And we shall always ask for it until we have an ad hoc committee that can seriously address the most important weapon system mankind has ever evolved. We believe our collaborators and partners should think again. If you want to encourage non-proliferation, start multilateral discussions on nuclear disarmament. Selective application of non-proliferation, selecting certain areas for discussion in this so-called sole negotiating body does not advance the security of States. It does not advance global security; it only advances the security of certain States, the powerful ones. What our system tell us is that those that are powerful today may not be powerful for ever. So we do need to invest in future security. And that is why we are calling for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to ponder on the problems for the twenty-first century so that we can start putting these horrible weapons where they belong - get rid of them.

Mr. BAALLAL (Algeria) (translated from French): I asked for the floor because I cannot remain indifferent to the reaction of the Western Group. There has been a rejection in its entirety and in detail of the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. In fact, my concern stems not from this flat and categorical rejection without a single following comment; my delegation's concern stems from the fact that there is a total lack of willingness to discuss the proposal or to take it as a basis for discussion. At no time did I note any reference whatsoever to the slightest willingness, the slightest disposition to discuss it. It is this lack of any prospect of discussion, this lack of openness, this extreme position that really worry my delegation, whose final conclusion from the response we have received is not that there is a refusal to negotiate in the CD - though negotiation is our priority - but that there is a refusal even to consider discussing it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement I take it that making a decision on this question today is not possible and this question requires further consultation. So I will put the question again in informal consultations during the inter-sessional period. I now invite the Conference to take a decision on the proposal by Germany to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Ban on the Production of Fissile Material for Nuclear Weapons or Other Nuclear Explosive Devices. In this regard I would like to recall that the mandate of that Committee as drafted by Ambassador Shannon in 1995 is contained in document CD/1299. Is there agreement in the Conference to re-establish this Committee with the mandate contained in document CD/1299? I give the floor to the representative of India.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I do not know what I can do to express my outrage, the gall I feel. We had used this word last year, which I was told was not an Americanism but chutzpah. We have just been told we will not discuss nuclear weapons, and there is a proposal that we are being asked to consider: the establishment of an ad hoc committee on FMTC, a subject on which my position and that of the Group of 21 was made clear. We have talked about a phased programme. We have even been told that the door, to quote Ambassador de Icaza, has been slammed in our face or that your face has been slapped or whatever it was he said. Can we have all this over again? I wish I could be as laconic and as categorical as the representative of Spain, who was speaking on behalf of the Western Group. We have just - not even an hour ago - talked precisely on this issue. And we have said how we see this issue. And we have said: yes, if you want to discuss cut-off, here is a proposal; you discuss it in a phased programme. What is it we are doing? Madam President, I am surprised that you even asked this question. Maybe the Ambassador of Germany had a point yesterday when he put it forward. Maybe he had not read the G-21 paper. Or maybe he had not at that point decided to reject it outright. But now we are being told that we discuss only FMCT and we will not discuss nuclear disarmament, we will not have an ad hoc committee under agenda item 1; we will not discuss your concerns. I am sorry, Madam President, I need an answer to this. I want to know whether we are here discussing our security concerns or whether these are to be completely overturned. If the answer to that is yes, I will leave just now. I will get up and walk out. I am worse than outraged that this should be raised at this point in time. If it had been taken up before we discussed the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, okay; I would perhaps have had a slightly different response. But now! I am sorry, I just want an answer to my question. On what grounds is this proposal being put forward after we have had our proposal so summarily rejected? On what basis?

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of India. I have heard all the reactions this afternoon, but since my task was to ask the questions put by the representative of Sri Lanka I was also obliged to ask the question put by the representative of Germany. I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): Madam President, you have asked a question and I think we have to give you an answer. So I will keep it very brief. My delegation has no difficulty in accepting the establishment of an ad hoc committee on fissile cut-off on the basis of the Shannon report and also taking into consideration paragraph 3 of document CD/1463. When we are ready to take a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament together with that, I am sure we all will be able to discuss the question of cut-off.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Well, at 6.05 p.m. on a Friday night before some of us start holidays, I want to make sure that I do not start holidays with Ambassador Ghose being furious with me. The question that you put, Madam President, is, I think, a valid one and we specifically asked you or reminded you to do so. That is not in any way a sign of disrespect to the Ambassador of India or to any other delegation. The earlier discussion that took place with reference to FMCT took place in response to an earlier question you put, where FMCT had been integrated by a group of delegations into a different proposed mandate. I have no surprise at all at the fact that, having put the question specifically on FMCT - not in connection with any other topic - the answer is going to be at the minimum that this group is not ready to take a decision on this at this time. And that, I think, this is where we should conclude. We are at 6.05 on a Friday night. But I do quite frankly, Madam President, think this delegation for one should at least support the fact that you asked the question and you did so at least at our request. I think we have had the issue explored and I have no problems in concluding with you that we are not ready at this point to take a decision. But if I got you into trouble before you start your July, I apologize.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): My understanding is the same as that of the distinguished delegate of Canada. We are starting now at this late hour talking about different things. My understanding was that we were asked to give our views on CD/1463, in which cut-off and nuclear disarmament are put in a specific context, and that that did not meet with approval. But we clearly consider cut-off as an issue of nuclear disarmament and by doing so, of course, we can talk about nuclear disarmament. This is, at least, the understanding of my delegation. I would be disappointed if this discussion led to the conclusion that such an important issue as cut-off could not be treated in this Conference. I think that at this late stage we will probably not be able to have an agreement, but I would hope that we will all start taking into account what has been said today - take that with us during the recess and take all the opportunities to consult with you, Madam President, and hopefully come back with some further enlightenments late in July at our next session.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): Very briefly, the answer to the question which you have put to us lately, Madam President, was made in my previous statement, that is, that we are ready to discuss cut-off under item 1 with the establishment of an ad hoc committee to deal with item 1. I made it clear that we have presented a programme of action, the first phase of which is "cut-off". We are ready to deal with that phase by phase, step by step, and one of the first steps to take is cut-off. So we are serious about it, but we are disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament is unable to make a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc committee to deal with item 1. That would surely facilitate the discussion of cut-off and helps us to address cut-off seriously as a measure of disarmament. So, my conclusion in two words is that I hope that the Western Group and others who share their views will review their position in this regard, and prevent the Conference on Disarmament from going into a stalemate.

Mr. ASOREY BREY (Spain) (translated from Spanish): Just two words to say that I didn't want us to leave this room with the bad taste in our mouths that I discerned in some of the statements made after I, in my capacity as Coordinator of the Western Group, expressed our group's position on a specific issue. The first thing I want to say is that the task for this afternoon was to make progress in our work, to answer the questions raised by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, and we felt, and I continue to think, that we were interpreting the feeling of the Conference in being brief, in going from one subject to another as was proposed and as you, Madam President, wished. The laconic style that some delegations have reproached me for using was due solely, on the one hand, to the mandate that, logically I had - and everyone here knows perfectly well, better than I, how things work in such situations - and on the other, to the concern that we should advance and not dwell at length on theoretical considerations. Consequently, I should like the perspective in which our position was expressed to be clear. There was - and here I am afraid I disagree with the distinguished representative of Algeria - absolutely no lack of will, no absence of intention to move forward on items. It was a matter of seeing to it that we all go away this evening with a clear idea on which topics there is consensus and on which there is not. Naturally there will be discussions on the substantive issues, but the main objective here today, this afternoon, was to make as much progress as possible on the proposals by the representative of Sri Lanka, and I sincerely think that the Western Group has tried to do this as clearly as possible, with good will and a desire that we really should go away this evening with something solid. If any delegation felt that the way in which this position was expressed was abrupt, I want to say that that was absolutely not the case, that it was expressed with the greatest respect for the positions of all countries and that we feel that sometimes it is, frankly, better to be brief, to say little in order to make progress.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Usually, proposals, especially procedural proposals that emanate from my friend, Ambassador Mark Moher of Canada, lead to the application of a soothing balm on most very difficult situations, but this afternoon, as I had feared, I believe that pressing on with the consideration of what we knew are difficult items on the agenda has perhaps once again and unfortunately transformed what 90 minutes ago was a good atmosphere and a sense of at least some movement in the Conference into one of, what shall I say, acrimony and outrage.

My delegation cannot say that we are outraged, we cannot afford to be outraged: we are dealing with our security. And in that context, I would like to say that the position of my delegation on the proposal that the distinguished Ambassador of Germany has made has been clearly stated in the context of the previous discussion we had on the issue of nuclear disarmament. I would like to draw attention again to document CD/1463 which contains the positions of 26 countries with regard to nuclear disarmament and in which it is stated that under the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament we would take up a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, taking into account the report of the Special Coordinator on this item - it is the Shannon report - and I would emphasize the following words: "and the views relating to the scope of the treaty".

We have underlined time and again the issue which I referred to earlier, that is, that for us the fissile materials convention has to be a convention for nuclear disarmament and not merely a treaty for non-proliferation. And we will press that point whenever we come to take up this issue in this Conference.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico)(translated from Spanish): Madam President, in the first place, I have to say that my delegation is aware that yesterday this proposal was made by the representative of Germany and that he asked that action be taken on it and that today it was repeated by the Ambassador of Canada, and for my delegation at any rate it seems quite appropriate that you should have asked the question. My delegation has no special problem with the establishment of an ad hoc committee on fissionable material. My delegation has made great efforts to find a solution that would allow us to begin negotiations. Within the Group of 21, it was to my delegation that it fell to coordinate the efforts to come up with this third paragraph of document CD/1463. It seems to me that the other groups in the Conference have not realized what great progress there has been in positions. It should be placed on record that on fissile material the Group of 21 has not given a flat and absolute refusal. It should be placed on record that we have made efforts to find a way to negotiate on it and it should also be placed on record that those efforts have not been appreciated.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): At this late hour I will be brief. My delegation is not outraged or surprised, we're perhaps a bit disappointed. It was said earlier that we had not engaged on the question of nuclear disarmament in this Conference, and that indeed, of course, is not true. And it was only perhaps because you had just heard us speak this week and you also heard us speak in May on this subject and also in informal consultations that we did not take up the time to address the substance of the issue at this meeting today. We certainly are prepared to do so and we have never shied away from discussion of the issue itself.

The question, though, is - and the issue has been put in terms of phases or steps - what steps could be taken in this context, and indeed in our view a number of steps are already under way. They are not taking place at this particular time in this forum. We believe that at least one should, and that should be fissile material cut-off. And for that reason we think it should stand alone as an issue for discrete addressal, and indeed we are prepared to take up the nuclear disarmament issue and it would be fissile material cut-off.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States for her statement. I propose that we resume discussion of this question as soon as we begin the third part of the session.

Dear colleagues, we have thus come to the end of our plenary meeting and of the second part of our session. We can rejoice in the fact that the Conference has been able to take a few steps, albeit modest steps, towards the establishment of our programme of work. We have appointed four special coordinators on landmines, expansion of the Conference, the agenda and the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. I am sure that they are going to take up their tasks with determination. We have also had an in-depth exchange of views on all of the other agenda items and on the mechanisms to be established to consider them. It is clear that we shall have to hold intensive consultations in the inter-sessional period and to revert to those issues with the necessary spirit of flexibility as soon as we resume our work on 28 July. I suggest, therefore, that we hold informal consultations starting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 29 July, in this room in order to pursue our efforts to establish ad hoc committees on the items on which consensus is reached. I hope that this proposal is acceptable to you.

I have a request for the floor from the representative of Iran. You have the floor.

Mr. BAIDI-NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): I'm sorry that I have asked for the floor at this late hour, but I think in order to pave the way for a more focused discussion in the inter-sessional period and the third part of the session, it is important to capture the main result of the discussions in these two days on the establishment of the ad hoc committees. From the discussions, one can judge that there is no objection in principle to the establishment of at least two ad hoc committees, namely NSA and outer space, but there is a need for some further consultations on the mandate of these two ad hoc committees. So I think the confirmation of such a result from today's discussions would provide us with a good ground for consultations, would make us more optimistic for the near future, and would demonstrate that we have not wasted our time from yesterday till this late hour. So, Madam President, I would ask that you would, in your summary, have that kind of statement that would pave the way for a more focused discussion in the inter-sessional period and the third part of the session.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Iran.

The next plenary meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on 31 July.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.771
29 July 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 29 July 1997, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mrs. Krasnohorská	(Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 771st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me first of all, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassadors Javier Illanes of Chile and Clive Pearson of New Zealand, who are taking part in our work for the first time. I would also like to assure them of our fullest cooperation and support in their new duties.

I also wish to inform you that, in conformity with the decision we took at the last plenary meeting, on 27 June 1997, immediately following the end of this plenary meeting we shall hold informal open-ended consultations in order to continue consideration of the items outstanding regarding the programme of work of the Conference.

On my list of speakers today I have the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston, and the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Maimeskul. As you know, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston is leaving this Conference after having represented his Government here for over five years with distinction and a consummate sense of humour. He joined the Conference at a crucial stage when it was finalizing negotiations on the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and most of us recall his personal contribution in the final stages of the negotiations. He also played an outstanding role in the drawing up of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, where he was always able to reconcile the views of his Government and the need to secure a consensus acceptable to all. During his stay in Geneva, Sir Michael Weston also worked extensively outside the context of the activities of the Conference on Disarmament, and his personal contribution to efforts to strengthen the Convention on Biological Weapons was to be seen in particular in the exemplary fashion in which he chaired the last review conference of States parties to the Convention. Accordingly, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I should like to wish him and his family much success and happiness in his new activities. I invite Ambassador Sir Michael Weston to take the floor.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I am sincerely touched by your kind words. As you say, I am taking the floor in a CD plenary for the last time today. Next Monday, I leave Geneva after five and a half years as the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the CD. In that time, I have listened to a good number of valedictory statements from departing colleagues. In these statements, there have been two recurring themes: first, the departing Ambassadors comment that in their time at the CD, they have completed a circuit of the chairs at the conference table, starting and finishing in the same place; secondly, Ambassadors recall their time as CD President. The welcome expansion of the CD's membership has changed all that - at least for me.

With regard to the first theme, however, perhaps now is the time to admit that, philistine that I am, I am no great fan of the austere murals which stare gloomily down on us, the effect accentuated by the strange custom of always having the curtains in the Council Chamber drawn across the windows so that we conduct our business in Stygian gloom. The fact that I have not been able to view the murals from every conceivable angle in this Chamber therefore causes me no great heartache. On the second theme, I used to think that the opposite would be true and that, in never having been President of the CD, I had missed out on one of life's great opportunities. However, as the CD's impasse has deepened, the job of CD President has this year become ever more arduous and thankless. Consequently, I am beginning to believe I have had a lucky escape. All the more so when I realize that, but for the CD's expansion, the United Kingdom would currently hold the Presidency and I should be delivering this statement from where you, Madam, are now sitting!

In her valedictory statement in 1992, my predecessor appealed for the use of dogs in chemical and biological weapons defence research programmes to cease. Although I sympathize with Miss Solesby's aim and certainly, sitting in this Chamber, empathize with the wretched beagles used in research on the effect of smoking and passive smoking on human beings, I have no such clear message. Nevertheless my remarks which follow are my personal views, not those of the British Government.

In my five years at the CD, I have come to look on the Conference as something akin to the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead: when she is good, she is very, very good; but when she is bad, she is horrid. My first four years here, beginning with the final stages of the CWC negotiations, were good years; 1997 on the other hand has been pretty horrid - so far at least. Last year, we added the CTBT to the impressive list of achievements of the CD and its predecessors. This year, the CD has been deadlocked for months and we have been unable to start any substantive work. All we have to show for our efforts is the appointment of the four special coordinators. We shall clearly have to do better if we expect our governments to continue to pay for us to live in this splendid country.

It seems to me to be important not to forget that the CD is, first and foremost, a negotiating forum. There are other places to talk about disarmament. The purpose of the CD is to produce agreements of substance and worth. We can only do this by negotiating on subjects which are ripe for negotiation. In my view, there are currently two of these: anti-personnel landmines (APLs) and the fissile material cut-off (FMCT). I sincerely hope, therefore, that Ambassador Campbell's appointment as Special Coordinator on APLs will lead rapidly to the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty. While the United Kingdom is fully committed to the Ottawa Process, complementary work in the CD is clearly necessary to bring in those who will not be with us in Ottawa in December. Meanwhile, I leave the CD with deep regret that we have been unable to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty either. The Shannon report, and the mandate contained therein, was a fragile consensus. But at least it showed that the CD can, by compromise, produce agreement on a common basis for work despite widely differing viewpoints of members. If the CD is ever to get down to proper negotiations again, such compromise will be necessary, on all sides. Nobody will get 100 per cent of what they want. As they say, half a loaf is better than no bread.

The need for reform of the CD's work methods and practices is self-evident. Ahmad Kamal made a good start on this a couple of years ago,

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

even if I personally remember him even more fondly for getting me a new diplomatic identity card and, consequently, often imagine I see his face on my card rather than my own. In appointing Ambassador Zahran, whose experience is equally vast, to continue Ambassador Kamal's work as Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning, the Conference has made an excellent choice. I wish him well in his task. I also welcome the appointment of Ambassador Náray as Special Coordinator for the agenda. I fear that his task is in some ways even more difficult than Ambassador Zahran's. He will have to listen to those who say the agenda needs updating as well as to those who agree that it needs updating but only if it stays the same. Finally, I wish Ambassador Kreid well as Special Coordinator on membership expansion. I sincerely hope that the wishes of those countries who want to join the CD can be satisfied, particularly those who have waited the longest to join the club. Here again, the Special Coordinator has no easy task. I still believe personally that it was a mistake not to admit all who had applied up to the time the 23 were admitted. But I fear that our subsequent experience, and the subsequent growth in the number of applicants, has led me to believe that this approach may no longer be the answer.

I have referred to the CD as a club. Of course there are some who would view the term "club" as pejorative. I have much sympathy with them, even though I come from a country where clubs are still popular and continue to provide a venue for men, and now even women, to get to know each other better. It would be wrong to underestimate the importance of personal relations in our work. Personally, I think that what we really mean when we talk of the CD's "expertise" is that we understand each other and have learned to work together.

A former British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, used to say that he always told ambassadors the truth because he knew they would not believe it. In a few days' time, I will, they tell me, have to retire after 36 years in the diplomatic service. I don't believe it. But alas it is true. It has been a great life. I am not sure that I have achieved much. But it has certainly been fun and it has been an honour and a privilege to end my career in the CD. I would like to thank all those, some of whom have already left and some of whom are absent today, who have made my five years in Geneva such a rewarding time for me - and for my wife, who leaves with me after seven years here, having already spent two years in the CD before I arrived. I would like sincerely to apologize to all those whom I have offended during this time, either by describing what they have said as rubbish or, for example, by suggesting that their countries are wriggling on a hook. Let me assure you that such comments were never malicious nor meant to be taken too seriously. In addition, I should like to thank the secretariat and the conference services staff. I should like to say a special thank-you to the interpreters, those faceless voices, whose task, at times, I must admit, I have mischievously tried to make more difficult but also, I hope, more challenging. Finally, I would like to thank those among the NGOs who have so willingly engaged in vigorous debate with me. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) have already promised to send me a membership application form on my birthday. I am not sure whether this gamekeeper is yet ready to turn poacher. The problem is that I actually believe in nuclear deterrence even in the post-cold-war era and, indeed, I am convinced that, along with many others who were in Kuwait in 1991, I owe my life to President Bush, who demonstrated just how deterrence should work. But that is where I came in five years ago.

But rather than end on too sombre a note, may I just suggest to you, to those of you who still do not understand the concept of nuclear deterrence, credible only if never used, that it may help to remember the story of the American who went into a smart shop in St. James's in London to buy a proper, ultra-thin, tightly rolled umbrella - not one of those horrid expanding things most of us carry in our briefcases. He asked the shop assistant how to roll it up after use. He was told he must never unroll it. He asked what then he should do if it rained. The reply was "Then, Sir, you stand on the kerb, raise the umbrella in your right hand and shout 'Cab!'"

My best wishes go to you, Madam President, to all my colleagues, and to the CD itself.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Sir Michael Weston for his statement and once again I wish him success and happiness. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Maimeskul.

Mr. MAIMESKUL (Ukraine) (translated from French): Madam President, it is with great pleasure that I wish to congratulate you on taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, especially since you represent a neighbour, a friendly country, which at the same time as Ukraine became a full member of the Conference on Disarmament, the prestigious international forum. Allow me also to express our gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Mrs. Diallo, Ambassador of Senegal, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, for their untiring efforts to improve the substance and the form of work of the CD, the aim being to maintain the CD's unique position in the field of arms control and disarmament. I would also like to wish Ambassador Sir Michael Weston every success and welcome the new ambassadors from New Zealand and Chile.

Despite the fact that for years now its agenda has remained unchanged, the Conference on Disarmament has always been alive to the challenges of the time, the barometer for measuring the climate of international security. The events which drove the CD to complete the negotiations on the Convention to prohibit chemical weapons and to produce the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty are well known. At the moment the Conference is seeking an adequate response to the challenge facing the international community as a result of the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines in several countries in the world. We are satisfied at the nomination of the CD's Special Coordinator on the mines problem, and we assure Ambassador Campbell of our full and constructive cooperation. Our delegation continues to believe that within the Conference there is an absolute need for an ad hoc committee on the problem of anti-personnel mines, since the members of the CD which are not involved in the Ottawa Process own almost half of global stocks of anti-personnel mines. It may well be that we will need to go through some intermediate phases in order to complete the total ban on anti-personnel mines.

Between the second and third parts of the 1997 CD session, the summit of NATO member countries was held in Madrid. Its outcome is certainly historic for the formation of the pan-European security system, and we feel it will have an important influence in the coming years on the process of global disarmament. It is absolutely necessary for this influence to be exclusively positive. As far as Ukraine is concerned, the importance of the Madrid summit lies first of all in the signing on 9 July of the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between Ukraine and NATO, a highly important international document. The document governs the relations of partnership that now exist between Ukraine and NATO, and establishes directions for the development of future cooperation between the parties concerned.

It must be emphasized that cooperation between Ukraine and NATO is not directed against any third party. This cooperation is based on recognition of the fact that security for all European countries is indivisible, that no country should pursue its own security at the expense of the security of another country and that no country can regard any part of the region as its sphere of influence. The two parties intend to build these mutual relations on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of other countries, the inviolability of frontiers and the development of good-neighbourly relations. Special emphasis is placed in the Charter on confirmation of the security assurances provided by the five nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Charter reiterates the commitments undertaken by the United States and the United Kingdom, and by Russia and France, which took the historic decision in Budapest in 1994 to provide Ukraine with security assurances as a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT. Ukraine's decision to renounce the possession of nuclear weapons and to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State greatly contributed to the strengthening of security and stability in Europe and earned my country special stature in the world community. As the Charter emphasizes, NATO welcomes Ukraine's decision to support the indefinite extension of the NPT and to lend its assistance to the withdrawal and dismantling of nuclear weapons based on its territory.

In this context, I recall the debate which took place at the end of the second phase of our session concerning the ad hoc committee on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States offered by the nuclear States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The resumption of the work of that ad hoc committee, the drawing up of the multilateral international treaty in this field, is in our view acceptable to almost all the members of the CD. It would also be in keeping with the challenge of the times and could offer us a way out of the deadlock for the CD.

In conclusion, I would like to refer once again to the Charter, whereby Ukraine and NATO will continue to implement fully all agreements on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and confidence-building measures to which they have subscribed. As you can see, Ukraine has taken another practical step testifying to my country's fidelity to the cause of the strengthening of peace, security and disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Maimeskul for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I have no further speakers on my list for today. Do any other delegations wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of Chile, Ambassador Illanes.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Very briefly, Madam President, I would like to thank you for your kind words of welcome for this delegate, on joining the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to say that my country and myself attach the greatest importance to this work, and that is why I am joining this meeting at this time with the best will to cooperate with you, with the secretariat, with the delegates of the other member countries of the Conference, in the major task on which this Conference has been engaged for many years, and which has its ups and downs. Wisdom probably consists in a long-term view to enable us to glimpse how we can seek consensus and secure progress. I know I shall learn much from daily contact and work with the diplomatic colleagues from other countries, whose wisdom was exemplified by the words we have just heard from Sir Michael Weston, who with a great deal of humour, but a great deal of philosophy and wisdom, has shown us the path of progress. For the moment I reiterate my gratitude to the President and assure her that she will enjoy my full cooperation in her future work.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh): I should like to pay tribute to Sir Michael Weston on the eve of his departure from the Conference. I have been in Geneva myself for only a few months, but within this short span of time I have been exposed to the prodigious qualities of the Ambassador: literary, as has been made amply evident today, sartorial, and despite his protestations, artistic. His humour was like a breath of fresh air in our sometimes rather staid work. It is with much sadness that I learn that after three and a half decades of active diplomacy he is finally laying down his bowler hat and umbrella. But we hope that he raises the umbrella to summon a cab that will take him to a very well-earned retirement. He compared the CD to a little girl of varied disposition. It reminds me of a poem by Mary Shelley:

> "As I walked down
> The Cranborough Lane,
> Cranborough Lane was dirty,
> There I met a pretty maid
> Who dropp'd to me a curts'y;
> I gave her cakes,
> I gave her wine,
> I gave her sugar candy;
> But oh! the little naughty girl,
> She asked me for some brandy!"

To some of our colleagues, the demands, such as the campaign for nuclear disarmament, placed on the CD are perhaps like the under-age little girl asking for strong liquor. Such perceptions notwithstanding, the CD has

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several remarkable achievements to its credit and I have no doubt that this will continue even if it be at times at such an unacceptably slow pace. I also welcome the new envoys of Chile and New Zealand and look forward to working together with them.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): I would like at the outset on behalf of my delegation to welcome the new ambassadors to the CD and wish His Excellency the Ambassador of the United Kingdom every happiness in his future life.

I would first like to refer to rule 11 of the rules of procedure, which reads: "Apart from exercising the normal functions of a presiding officer and in addition to the powers conferred upon him elsewhere by these rules, the President shall, in full consultation with the Conference and under its authority, represent it" - and I underline that: represent it - "in its relations with States, with the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations and with other international organizations."

My delegation has deemed it necessary to refer to this rule in the light of the report that we have received concerning the President's meeting with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 3 July. What the President said to the Secretary-General concerning anti-personnel landmines in the second paragraph of her report, whether it stems from her belief that the CD is the appropriate forum to deal with this subject or from her belief that a ban on transfers will lead to the desired objective, I would like to say that the President's report on these two points does not reflect the viewpoint of the Conference on Disarmament as a whole. My delegation would therefore like to place on record the fact that it disagrees with the President's understanding of these two points.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): For my delegation today is a day of mixed feelings. On the one hand, we regret the departure of our friend Sir Michael Weston, though despite his five and a half years in the Conference on Disarmament, he continues to confuse nuclear weapons with umbrellas. On the other hand, this is the first time it falls to me to welcome Ambassador Javier Illanes. I have had occasion to bid him farewell twice: the first time in Brasilia when we were ambassadors there; the second in the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, almost a decade ago, and I recall on that occasion I said that, in our lengthy friendship, our parting was just the first step towards meeting again. We have now met again, and this Conference has gained from the arrival of Ambassador Illanes, a distinguished jurist, a great gentleman, who will make a great contribution to our work. Of course that does not console us for the departure of Sir Michael Weston, who has a greater sense of humour than Ambassador Illanes. Welcome also to the Ambassador of New Zealand, Ambassador Pearson. Our delegations work together here and in New York on these subjects and we share views, ideals and objectives. Finally, just to place on record the view of the delegation of Mexico concerning the President's report on her meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General, namely that on that occasion the President expressed solely and exclusively the views of her delegation, not the views of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage? There are not.

As I announced at the beginning of this plenary meeting, I would like to remind you that in 15 minutes' time we will be holding open-ended informal consultations.

Before I adjourn this plenary meeting, I would like to inform you that the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, will be holding his first meeting this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this room.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 31 July at 11 a.m., since other consultations will be held between 9 and 11 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.772
31 July 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 July 1997, at 11.30 a.m.

President: Mrs. Krasnohorská (Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 772nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me first of all, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to welcome the Deputy Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Ambassador Ralph Earle, who will be our first speaker. The fact that he is back with us today, at a time when the Conference is actively seeking a basis on which it can get down to its substantive work, testifies to the continuing interest which his Government takes in our Conference. I am sure that his statement will be followed with deep interest by everyone. I invite Ambassador Earle to take the floor.

Mr. EARLE (United States of America): I can assure you that my tardiness does not reflect any disinterest in the activities of this Conference. We were informed that the meeting was 11.30, but I apologize in any event.

As you indicated, it has been some time since I have been here, a little over two years since I last had the honour to address the Conference on Disarmament, although I have been here on a number of occasions since then. But it is a pleasure to return and to address a body substantially enlarged in membership.

May I, at the outset, express the thanks of the United States delegation for your able and determined efforts to advance the important work of this body, Madam President? The Conference's decision to appoint four special coordinators at the end of June, in particular the Special Coordinator for anti-personnel landmines, was due in no small part to your leadership, and we will support fully your continuing efforts in the coming weeks, as well as those of the four special coordinators.

This morning I would like to begin by recalling President Clinton's statement to the United Nations General Assembly last 24 September, the day he became the first leader to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the text of which was negotiated in this very room. He underlined the importance of the CTBT and, at the same time, outlined an agenda for further progress to reduce the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and other weapons that kill and maim indiscriminately. On that day in September in New York, he identified six objectives that affect us all: bringing the Chemical Weapons Convention into force; bringing START II into force and negotiating further reductions in the United States and Russian nuclear arsenals; strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; strengthening compliance with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention; negotiating a global ban on anti-personnel landmines; and negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty in this Conference. I would like to review these objectives with you and your colleagues, and to assess briefly how far we have moved toward accomplishing them. Overall, since the President spoke at the General Assembly, we have made significant progress on the four objectives that do not involve the Conference on Disarmament, namely the first four.

(Mr. Earle, United States)

First, as we all know, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April, and the first Conference of States Parties was held in The Hague in May, and initial on-site inspections have already begun, including inspections in the United States. The parties have begun global implementation. States parties nave made declarations that will add to our knowledge of global chemical capabilities. In short, this Convention, dismissed by some as a "feel-good" arms control treaty, is already demonstrating its value, and I take no small satisfaction in the fact that the United States is an original party to this Convention, negotiated so painstakingly in this Conference. As of last week, the Convention boasted more than 165 signatories and almost 100 parties. We urge those States that have not yet ratified to do so promptly, and we urge those States that have not signed to sign and ratify equally promptly.

Second, the United States and the Russian Federation have taken further steps to reduce the number of their nuclear weapons. We are pursuing the implementation of treaties that go far beyond anything imagined to be practical in the early 1970s or even in the mid-1980s. We are committed to achieving, in the words of the May 1995 NPT "Principles and objectives" decision, the objective of "systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally".

Last March, at the Helsinki summit, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed that after the START II Treaty enters into force, the United States and Russia will immediately begin negotiations on a START III agreement. That agreement, once implemented, would reduce the number of deployed United States and Russian strategic warheads to a level of 2,000 to 2,500. This would constitute approximately an 80 per cent reduction from peak cold war levels and go significantly beyond START II, which already requires reductions of more than two thirds.

In an important new development, President Clinton and President Yeltsin also agreed at Helsinki that the START III negotiations will be the first strategic arms control negotiations to address "measures relating to the transparency of strategic nuclear warhead inventories and the destruction" of such warheads. In previous strategic arms control agreements, the two sides had agreed to limit and reduce launchers and delivery vehicles. These new measures will promote the irreversibility of deep reductions. To reach this objective, of course, Russia must first ratify START II, but we believe the Helsinki understandings should facilitate that ratification.

Third, the process of strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and an integral part of the international security system, is well under way. In April, the first of three Preparatory Committee meetings for the Year 2000 Review Conference successfully launched the "strengthened treaty review process" called for by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. This meeting established a constructive basis for the development of recommendations on principles, objectives, and ways to achieve the full implementation of the NPT, including universal adherence.

We welcome the accessions to the NPT of Angola, Djibouti, and Oman, and the 20 June announcement by Brazil that it intends to join the NPT. When Brazil does become a party, only four States will remain outside the treaty regime.

Effective international safeguards are a sine qua non for effective non-proliferation. This past May, agreement was reached on a model protocol that will improve the efficiency and strengthen the effectiveness of safeguards, and enhance the capability of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to detect undeclared nuclear activities. These efforts mark a successful conclusion of IAEA's so-called programme "93 plus 2", begun after the discoveries of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapon programme. This strengthening of IAEA safeguards will significantly reduce the danger that any nation can secretly acquire a nuclear arsenal.

Fourth, I am pleased to note that the Ad Hoc Group on the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) is now meeting in Geneva and will conclude its current session tomorrow. In his September address at the United Nations, President Clinton called for the urgent conclusion of a legally-binding protocol to strengthen compliance with the Convention. From that we will continue to work aggressively to achieve that goal as soon as possible. Strengthening confidence in compliance with the BWC is a critical task, especially in light of troubling attempts to develop and deploy biological and toxin weapons.

Progress on meeting these objectives is tangible and ongoing. However, the relative state of affairs with respect to an anti-personnel landmine (APL) ban and a cut-off treaty, the two items for which the Conference on Disarmament has a leading role, regrettably appears rather bleak, despite their high priority.

On the matter of a global ban on anti-personnel landmines, we congratulate Ambassador Campbell of Australia on his appointment as the Special Coordinator for this issue. We have great confidence in his abilities, and we hope that his efforts will result in the early beginning of negotiations in this Conference to ban anti-personnel landmines.

We also commend the Government of Canada for its initiative on anti-personnel landmines. The Ottawa Process has added strength and momentum to the comprehensive work on landmines that must be undertaken in the CD. We hope that the Ottawa Process will achieve successes that the Conference on Disarmament is not able to accomplish immediately. The Ottawa Process and the CD negotiations each make a useful contribution and each augments the other. In a word, they are "complementary". There is no reason why either one has to interfere with the other.

The CD can accomplish objectives that the Ottawa Process is not expected to achieve. The States expected to sign the Ottawa treaty are those that are prepared now to make a commitment to eliminate all of their anti-personnel landmines by a fixed date. On the other hand, the CD includes many States that are not prepared to take that step today, States that give us little reason to believe they will sign the Ottawa treaty later.

The value of negotiating an APL ban in the CD can be confirmed simply by looking around this chamber. As of 27 June more than half of the CD members, including the United States, had not associated themselves with the Brussels Declaration of the Ottawa Process. As the distinguished representative of Ukraine pointed out in his speech this past Tuesday, these countries make up half or more of the world's population and economic output and half or more of the world's historical activity with regard to anti-personnel landmines, and many of them have security concerns about eliminating their landmines in the near future.

We believe negotiations in the CD can take these concerns, including our own, into account. Thus, while the CD's task will take longer to accomplish than the Ottawa Process, the resulting treaty will, unlike the Ottawa Process, extend the reach of an APL ban to the major producers, stockpilers and exporters of anti-personnel landmines.

The importance of such a worldwide ban is illustrated by considering the many casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines around the globe by groups and individuals who have demonstrated no respect for international agreements or humanitarian concerns, and the only way to stop the irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines is to eliminate the source of those mines. To accomplish that objective, an agreement must include the potential exporters. Many such exporters are far more likely to support an agreement negotiated by them, among others, in this Conference that, inter alia, would ban the export of anti-personnel landmines.

This brings us to the issue of an APL negotiating mandate in the Conference here. In his intervention before this body on 15 May, ACDA Director John Holum underlined strong United States support for the mandate proposed by the Japanese and Hungarian delegations. When we begin work, we fully anticipate that many members of this body will offer proposals that will help shape that agreement. A broad mandate will not prejudice anyone's position in the negotiations and will permit those negotiations to begin at once. However, if it were useful to elaborate on or modify this text to address specific concerns of other delegations, such as the need for a step-by-step approach, we believe the Special Coordinator should consider such elaborations or modifications. We should then be able, on an urgent basis, to decide on an acceptable mandate as a framework for negotiations.

Now let me turn to a cut-off treaty. The negotiation and successful conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) by the Conference on Disarmament would be an important measure in the overall process of nuclear disarmament. It would mandate verification of all fissile material production, specifically reprocessing and enrichment, and the newly produced fissile material in all countries that now have unsafeguarded production or production facilities. The treaty would apply, without discrimination, to all parties, including the nuclear-weapon States. It would codify the policy declarations by nuclear-weapon States on the cessation of fissile material production for nuclear weapons into an international legal, and verifiable, obligation, making the reversal of those policies far more difficult.

I urge each of you to consider the reinforcing impact that an FMCT would have on parallel efforts to dismantle nuclear warheads, to place fissile material that is determined to be excess to national security requirements under safeguards, and to achieve even deeper nuclear weapons reductions leading toward their eventual elimination. These efforts could be harmed if unsafeguarded fissile material production is not banned.

Without a cut-off treaty, the chances of achieving the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament would be decreased significantly. In looking ahead toward post-START III negotiations, nuclear arms reductions would be far more difficult without a ban on new fissile material production for weapons embodied in a treaty that provides confidence that the international community would detect clandestine production. As President Clinton said in his January message to this Conference, "effectively cutting off the spigot for more nuclear weapons is a necessary step toward, and would greatly contribute to, the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament".

The CD's strength is negotiating detailed agreements. The CD now has a window of opportunity to negotiate a fissile material cut-off and a ban on anti-personnel landmines. We should act now while that window is open.

Despite the clear benefits of CD negotiations to ban anti-personnel landmines and the production of fissile material for nuclear explosives, some States have proposed conditions that have impeded real work. The first condition proposes that the "price", if you will, for negotiations should be the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. A second and related condition is that such a committee should negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons by a set date or in a "time-bound" manner.

The United States delegation has repeatedly made it clear how counter-productive these conditions are or would be. Accepting this sort of linkage would hurt, not help, the prospects of productive negotiations.

The only realistic way to pursue nuclear reductions is through the bilateral START process and eventually through a process involving other nuclear-weapon States. I believe that most members recognize this. I also believe that most members recognize that the so-called "time-bound nuclear disarmament" approach is not realistic, despite any superficial appeal. I can assure you, and this is from personal experience, that had the Soviet Union and the United States decided in the late 1960s to negotiate a time-bound framework for nuclear disarmament, rather than SALT I and the SALT II, we would still be there talking about hypothetical conditions and scenarios.

Let me conclude by recalling ACDA Director Holum's observation here on 15 May that the future effectiveness of this body depends in large measure on whether it can rise to the challenges of the banning of the production of fissile material and of eliminating anti-personnel landmines. Of the six objectives President Clinton set out over 10 months ago, it is only on these two that progress has been so slow. We have expended too much time with too little result, and the future of this body appears not much brighter today than it did in May, but let us change this assessment by September.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Earle for his statement. I have no further speakers listed for today. Do any other delegations wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt has asked me to inform you that he will be holding informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament on Tuesday 12 August at 3 p.m. in this room. My consultations show that delegations appreciate the work performed by Ambassador Mounir Zahran. Delegations have expressed the wish that the three other special coordinators should hold informal open-ended consultations. I would therefore like to encourage them to consider the possibility of holding such consultations.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 7 August, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.773
7 August 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 7 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Krasnohorská (Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 773rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On my list of speakers for today I have the representatives of the Netherlands and Cameroon, as well as the representative of Nigeria, who will address the Conference in his capacity as Coordinator of the Group of 21.

As you know, the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Jaap Ramaker, is about to leave this Conference, having been called by his Government to perform other duties. Ambassador Ramaker has represented his country in this Conference for three years, which I think I may describe as full and productive. His personal contribution to the drawing up of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty has rightly been acknowledged by all of us. The talent and skill with which he chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban's Working Group on Legal and Institutional Issues in 1995, and the energy and patience with which he chaired the Ad Hoc Committee last year during the final phase of the negotiations, are a source of inspiration for all of us in our common striving towards the establishment of a world of peace and stability. Accordingly, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I would like to wish Ambassador Ramaker and his family much success and happiness in their new life.

I invite Ambassador Ramaker to take the floor.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Lately, it has become fashionable in this Conference to try and find common ground also in the course of formal plenary sessions. So it was on one of these occasions, just before our summer break, that I already had an opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the way in which you, Madam President, try to steer us into safer waters. May I repeat this today and add how much impressed I am with the dignity with which you perform, unfortunately at this moment, a seemingly thankless task.

A warm word of welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassador Javier Illanes of Chile and the neighbour to my left, Ambassador Clive Pearson of New Zealand, who cannot be here today. Welcoming new colleagues in a farewell speech strikes me as symbolic for the continuity of this Conference. I wish both well in their future tasks.

As I am about to leave Geneva, allow me to make a few personal observations on the present state of affairs in this Conference, a Conference which has so much contributed to making this world a somewhat safer place to live in. For almost one and a half decades I have been participating in, or have been following from more or less a distance, the events in this Conference. My baptism as a multilateral diplomat took place here in this very hall, in the early eighties, roughly where my friend and colleague Antonio de Icaza is sitting right now (although at the time I was not sitting in the driver's seat as he is now). Different times were those. The cold war was at its height in 1983, or so it seemed, and of course we, here in the CD - what else is new? - had a cold war of our own. Little did we know then, in those years of fruitless, all too often bitter recriminations, by the way largely gone unnoticed in "the real world", that the time of great opportunities for that "single multilateral negotiating body" we were working in was around the corner. Did I just say fruitless? Maybe on the face of it, but already then, despite the seeming paralysis prevailing in the Conference in those days, some important foundations were laid for the great results we have reached in this Conference since then. I feel immensely privileged that I was given the chance to be instrumental in helping shape one of these results, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, last year, in the middle of my second stay in Geneva.

It should come as no surprise that after such a long period of direct or indirect involvement and interest in CD matters I am leaving this Conference with the proverbial mixed feelings. While I am looking forward to my new responsibilities in New York, I regret having to leave so many colleagues and friends, whose qualities, both human and professional, have made my work here in Geneva, trying as it was at times, at the same time such a tremendous pleasure.

In my view, the Conference on Disarmament, after the remarkable successes reached this decade, finds itself, at least thus far, in a period of reorientation rather than in one of real crisis. With the benefit of memory that goes back to the early 1980s - an asset I share with a few others present here today - may I offer some, as I said, personal reflections on the CD, on what it stands for or ought to stand for, on what it ought to do or at any rate reasonably can do? And in order not to take up too much of our time this morning, let me do so in a number of points that I will try to formulate as concisely as possible.

First, it seems to me important to reiterate what seems to be at first sight the obvious: this Conference is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is a vehicle, not the road itself. But what is important here to note is that the spare parts, so to speak, the delegates, over the years have changed all the time, while the vehicle remained in running condition. It could start and drive off at any moment. Even in periods of seeming inactivity - and this year is not unique; the CD had quite a few of them in the past, I can assure you - skills and expertise were handed over from generation to generation of delegates. This kept the vehicle in mint condition so that it could be used at any time, when the conditions were there.

Second, it is worth while pointing out, it seems to me, that amongst the many vehicles of multilateral diplomacy, the CD, I think, is a real limousine. Those here in this room who are in a better position to judge than I have been these past few years tell us that, in fact, this Conference is the best club in town, an opinion widely shared not only amongst ourselves, of course, but by many a restaurant of good reputation in Geneva and its attractive vicinities.

Third, in comparing the Conference to a club, a club comprising, by the way, both members and observers, let me emphasize that this club character, or rather this club atmosphere, is one of the lesser known reasons for its successes. With an increased and, in due course, further increasing membership - and let me take this opportunity to wish the newly appointed Special Coordinator, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, success in his difficult task - it is and will be important to maintain the essence of the idea of a club, of the "esprit de corps" if you wish, and the work ethos it stands for.

While our capitals at times may be bewildered on what is going on in the Conference, thus it is that we as club members do not panic: we know better.

Fourth, all of this to say, and this on a more serious note, that in a period like the CD is going through at the moment, we should guard against jumping to hasty conclusions as to the vehicle itself. In my view, it has still all the potential to serve us well in further multilateral disarmament efforts.

Fifth, and let me drop these not so original metaphors of vehicles and clubs, time has come, in my view, to thoroughly reflect, once again, on the meaning of the notion "the single multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament", which traditionally describes the CD. Disarmament efforts go on elsewhere in the world. The CD, for the first time in its history, even encounters some form of competition. Last month, the Secretary-General of the United Nations presented his reform package to the Member States. While the Secretary-General limited his proposals to his sphere of competence, it is, in my view, clear that the intergovernmental bodies will have to follow suit. And this Conference is no exception. Like other forums, it will have to take into account a changed and continuously changing world. I welcome the fact that not only once again a Special Coordinator for the agenda could be appointed, but also one for improved and effective functioning. I sincerely hope that my Hungarian and Egyptian colleagues will be able to reach some meaningful results.

Sixth, it has been some years now since the last of the Group of Wise Men, but also the last Group of Wise Men thus far, which was formed in the CD towards the end of the 1980s, left Geneva. In the absence, or - who knows? - maybe the temporary absence, of such a group Ambassador Zahran and Ambassador Náray may give a broad interpretation to their tasks. But in the last analysis it is not procedures or methods of work, although some improvements could, of course, be made here, but, rather, differences on the substance of our security policies that very often if not always prevent us from making substantive progress. While no mechanism or forum in this area of human endeavour is more representative than is the CD, an in-depth reflection of the immediate and longer-term possibilities and impossibilities of this Conference in the new security environment of today's world seems in order. So is there maybe room for another, informal of course, group of wise men and women?

Seventh, in the meantime, a number of thoughts occur to me of what could be kept in mind in the CD's proceedings. They could help smooth the path, I hope; none of them entails any change in formal rules.

One is that, while essentially a negotiating body, the CD cannot always but negotiate. Spoiled as our capitals are in these, for the CD, so productive 1990s, they should not forget that the most recent products of the Conference, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, were preceded by years and years, even decades, of preparation. So negotiating does not exclude - on the contrary I would say - exploratory work. I am happy to note that my Australian colleague, John Campbell is at present exploring the possibilities of starting work on anti-personnel landmines in this Conference. I wish him every success. Of course, it should not take years of preparation this time.

Another one is the all too often overlooked fact that, yes, delegations have their instructions, but, yes, apart from interpreting them in their own way, they contribute themselves in shaping them in their contacts with their capitals. It is worth while reminding ourselves, under the present circumstances in the CD, that delegates, therefore, notwithstanding their instructions, do have their own individual responsibility for the well-being of the Conference as well.

The Conference would be well advised, in my view, furthermore, not to encroach too often or too much on the traditionally existing prerogatives of the President. He or she should have the freedom to organize the necessary consultations as he or she sees fit. Consultations to reach consensus on how to consult carries both the consultation process and, for that matter, the rule of consensus, it seems to me, to the absurd.

Presidents in office, finally, might consider to keep their immediate predecessor and successor closely associated with their own entire consultation process. This would serve, in my view, the continuity which is especially important as the annual session of the Conference draws to a close.

Earlier in my statement, I already mentioned how privileged I felt that I could bring many years of work aimed at the conclusion of a Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty at long last to a successful conclusion. I look back on a few years of incredibly hard, but at the same time challenging, work. Not only here in this Conference: in 1995, in the Chair of one of the two working groups the test ban negotiations had divided themselves in, as you mentioned this morning, but also in New York in the Chair of one of the main committees of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Nothing can ever equal the eventful year of 1996. While I am grateful and touched by what you said a few moments ago about the role of my delegation and myself in bringing about the CTBT, that result could never have been obtained were it not for a number of reasons: a strong desire on the part of individuals and Governments all over the world to put a definitive end to nuclear testing, a remnant of, in the eyes of many, a quickly fading past, together with the tremendous efforts exerted by delegations present in this room, to name just the most important ones.

In a few days I will have left Geneva and I am fully aware that here in the CD I leave more behind than simply friends. Comrades-in-arms, strange as it may sound in a disarmament body, is maybe a better term, but then a term not used in the usual sense of the word. We were not on the same side of a battle line, as comrades-in-arms usually are, but on different sides of many different battle lines. Isn't that after all the essence of multilateral diplomacy? But comrades we remained nevertheless.

In conclusion, let me thank you yourself, Madam President, and all of my colleagues for their friendship and cooperation. My gratitude extends to our Secretary-General, Vladimir Petrovsky, to his deputy, Abdelkader Bensmail, and the entire staff of the secretariat. A particular word of thanks also should go to Mrs. Jennifer Mackby, who assisted my delegation and me in an invaluable manner during the CTBT negotiations over the last few years. She cannot be with us today because she devotes her expertise these weeks in Vienna precisely to the PrepCom on CTBT. I also sincerely thank our highly qualified interpreters, who waged their own battle with the language we used (and I apologize, in passing, to the English language), and the rest of the United Nations staff who on more than one occasion not only helped me but encouraged me in my efforts last year.

Mr. NGOUBEYOU (Cameroon) (translated from French): Madam President, it is a great pleasure for my delegation and myself to pay tribute to you for the elegant and courteous way in which you have guided the work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) during this particularly difficult period in its activities. We would like to express our gratitude to your predecessors for the wonderful job they did in trying to achieve the goals and noble ideals of the Conference on Disarmament.

Despite the fact that the general feeling prevailing today among the members of the Conference on Disarmament in particular and the international community in general seems to be disappointment, not to say frustration, due to the inability of member States to reach agreement on a definitive programme of work this year, there remain many reasons for pride and satisfaction for the Conference on Disarmament, reasons which allow us to view the future with a degree of optimism. Inter alia the Conference on Disarmament has successfully concluded, in conditions similar to those we are encountering today, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as well as the agreement on the expansion of its membership.

Just before the suspension of our work after the second part of the session of the Conference, we agreed to appoint four special coordinators to consider the agenda, anti-personnel landmines, expansion and the improved functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. However small these achievements may seem, they do illustrate the will and determination of the members of the CD to continue the search for adequate solutions to the disarmament problems challenging the world today. My delegation undertakes to contribute as far as its modest capabilities permit towards achieving these goals. This is why since the beginning of this year we have worked in a spirit of active solidarity with all the members of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and in particular with the Group of 21 to put forward proposals which we feel are not only important but necessary if progress is to be made in the work of the CD. And it is in the light of all the above that we fully supported the proposals of the Group of 21 on the programme of work of the CD, as contained in document CD/1462, as well as the proposals of 26 countries from the Group of 21 contained in CD/1463 with regard to the mandate for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. Today, as far as my delegation is concerned, these proposals are still just as relevant as they were yesterday. My delegation continues to believe that nuclear disarmament is of paramount importance to the existence of mankind and therefore remains a priority issue for the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

My delegation also supports the view that the question of anti-personnel landmines also merits very careful consideration. The very fact that this category of weapons causes indiscriminate killing among the civilian and military population places it at the centre of both humanitarian and disarmament concerns. From that standpoint my delegation is prepared to discuss this problem both outside and within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). This is why my delegation is one of those which are involved in the Ottawa Process and hope that the Conference on Disarmament will take up the efforts undertaken in that process and complement and reinforce them.

My country is one of the new members of the CD. My delegation reiterates its gratitude to all the member States which worked tirelessly for years for the expansion of the CD, an expansion which finally bore fruit last year with the admission of a few new members, including my country. As we have had occasion to declare earlier, my delegation believes that if the Conference on Disarmament is a forum for the international multilateral negotiation of treaties with universal application, its membership should reflect that objective. Thus my delegation will continue its efforts to promote this expansion of the CD while awaiting the report of the Special Coordinator on this item.

In order to achieve greater efficiency, it is important for the Conference on Disarmament to streamline both its agenda and its programme of work so as to allow delegations to play an effective part in each phase of the negotiations. In their present state the agenda and the programme of work of the CD are in our humble opinion more than overloaded.

To conclude, my delegation is pleased to note that despite everything, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has already achieved enormous and substantial progress towards a gradual but effective disarmament process. However, there is still a long road to travel, with many obstacles along the way. We must not be disheartened. On the contrary, we must commit ourselves, with the future generation, to promoting the goals and principles of building a world free of all weapons of mass destruction and indiscriminate slaughter. To this end, Madam, you can rely on my delegation.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Cameroon for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria, Ambassador Abuah.

Mr. ABUAH (Nigeria): I have asked for the floor to make a statement on behalf of the Group of 21, which I have the honour to represent as its current Coordinator. However, before I do so, let me convey to you, Madam, the felicitations of the Nigerian delegation for the skills you are continually applying in the conduct of business of this Conference under very difficult circumstances. Your immediate predecessor, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo, equally gave of her best to resolve the present problems of the Conference. Yet, in no small measure, these problems still remain. This is why I have been directed by the Group of 21 to make the following statement on its behalf.

The Group of 21 attaches the highest priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament, which has been determined by the international community as the most important item on the disarmament agenda. To this end, on 5 June 1997, the Group submitted the proposal contained in document CD/1462 which called for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. The Group of 21 regrets that this proposal was rejected out of hand by certain delegations as inappropriate. That was only a setback which in our view does not affect the commitment of the Group on its proposal on nuclear disarmament. The Group of 21 continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

In the context of its proposals contained in the document on the question, namely CD/1462, the Group of 21 recalls its suggestion for the re-establishment of ad hoc committees on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Group of 21 notes that certain delegations in the Conference on Disarmament had asked for time to obtain instructions from their competent authorities, hopefully, in the view of the Group of 21, to allow for the re-establishment of these two committees. The Group would now wish to be able to benefit from these instructions, which should have been received by now, so that work on these committees can go forward.

Regarding the work of the special coordinators on expansion of the CD, agenda of the CD, improved and effective functioning of the CD and the question of anti-personnel landmines, the Group commits itself to continue to cooperate with the coordinators. In this context, the Group urges the special coordinators to consult widely, in a transparent manner, on the range of issues involved. To this end, the Group commends the manner in which the consultations by the Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament have been conducted, and urges this approach for consideration by the other coordinators.

It is the hope of the Group of 21 that the special coordinators should conclude their work early so that consideration of their reports in the Conference could be undertaken as expeditiously as possible.

This completes the statement of the Group of 21, but while I still have the floor, may I beg your indulgence. Let me say goodbye to my colleague to the right, Ambassador Ramaker, a fine diplomat. Let me also welcome our colleagues who have joined the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Nigeria for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I have no more speakers today. Would any other delegations like to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh): We have heard yet another valedictory statement today. In the last plenary meeting we welcomed new colleagues. This gives us a sense of continuous movement and change. Sadly, though, this movement and change is not necessarily matched by movement and change in our work.

Rich tributes are truly owed to Ambassador Ramaker. His remarks today display a few sparks of the firmament of which his intellect is made. If the CD had a hall of fame, a niche for him would be ensured. Praising him also gives me particular pleasure as his country, the Netherlands, and mine, Bangladesh, have been cooperating across a broad spectrum, from disarmament to development. We, however, draw some satisfaction from the belief that old CD Ambassadors, like old soldiers, never die. But unlike old soldiers, they do not fade away. Happily, they simply relocate to continue their contribution.

Bangladesh would underscore our total support for the G-21 position as very ably expressed by Ambassador Abuah of Nigeria. We also wish to record at the same time our deep disappointment with the lack of progress in the deliberations of the CD. We would like to make a fervent appeal to the membership to make every effort towards such progress. It is difficult to see how this can be achieved unless there is a spirit of give and take. The G-21 position reflects the apprehensions and the aspirations of an overwhelming majority of the global populace. These concerns should be taken seriously. Also, might I express our confidence that all of us in the G-21 are prepared to accommodate the genuine points that the other groups might raise? Countries like Bangladesh have a commitment towards disarmament that has only practical, and no ideological, content. In this specific case, we do not, for instance, see why, on prevention of an arms race in outer space and NSA, ad hoc committees cannot be established, pending or notwithstanding instructions. In the end, however, we will need to have consensus. This will reflect the kind of positive spirit that will help in other areas. No one is suggesting that anyone's security be compromised. We would like to see the CD proceed, with a respectful perception of one another's views, which is a sine qua non if we must move forward, and indeed we must.

Ambassador Ramaker compared us to a limousine. Of what good is a limousine if it is forever stalled?

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Bangladesh for his statement. Would any other delegations like to take the floor? Since none wish to do so, before adjourning this plenary meeting I would remind you that the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, will hold open-ended informal consultations on Tuesday, 12 August at 3 p.m. in this room. I would also like to inform you that Ambassador Náray of Hungary, the Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference, intends to hold informal open-ended consultations next Thursday after the plenary. That announcement is subject to confirmation after Ambassador Náray's return. I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): I requested the floor, Madam President, because I think that you were on the verge of adjourning or raising this meeting, although the Coordinator of the Group of 21 did inquire about the views of delegations which had asked for additional time to give their replies as regards the creation of an ad hoc committee on cessation of the arms race in space and an ad hoc committee on security assurances to countries which do not possess nuclear weapons. I think that this request should be seriously taken into account. It is a request which represents half of the members of this forum. We still await the reply of the States which have asked for additional time to give their replies, and we have been waiting for more than a month.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. Would any delegation like to reply to that question? I see none.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 14 August at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.774
14 August 1997

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Krasnohorská (Slovakia)

__The PRESIDENT__ (__translated from French__): I declare open the 774th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On my list of speakers today I have the representatives of New Zealand, Iraq, Australia - speaking as Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines - and Kazakhstan. I give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Pearson.

__Mr. PEARSON__ (New Zealand): Madam President, may I first congratulate you on assuming the presidency and assure you of my full cooperation in the exercise of your duties?

It is both an honour and a pleasure to address you for the first time today, particularly as New Zealand's first Ambassador for Disarmament. I want to take this opportunity to thank those colleagues for the warm welcome extended to me since my arrival. I shall do my best to cooperate and to work constructively with all of you.

New Zealanders care deeply about the need for disarmament. We have participated in more than enough international conflicts this century to have a real appreciation of what is at stake and what this Conference is expected to achieve. In striving for a world that is free of nuclear arms and other no less awesome weapons of mass destruction, New Zealanders are looking to this Conference to deliver that imperative. So far this year, our record has been one of deadlock and inflexibility. It is a situation for which we must assume responsibility and one that all of us will be reflecting upon seriously. This state of affairs cannot continue indefinitely. The time has come for some creative new thinking. While I understand that the curtains in this chamber remain closed for most of the time, as a new arrival let me assure delegates that there is a real world outside. It is demanding that we make progress and there is no understanding for the fact that we appear to be suffocating in process rather than in outcomes. We all know that there has never been a more auspicious time for us to move forward.

Madam President, let me assure you and delegates that New Zealand will continue to search for the middle ground in moving ahead, because clearly that is the only way we shall be able to re-engage. We are ready now, for example, to start work on fissile cut-off negotiations in a way that takes into account differing views on its scope. We have an open mind on how we might pursue other initiatives before us. The New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Right Honourable Don McKinnon, outlined in detail our approach earlier this year in this Conference. I would commend delegates to reflect on those proposals again.

We have consistently urged this Conference to begin a dialogue on nuclear disarmament. We advocate this should be a two-track approach - a preparatory track and a negotiating track. In doing so, we consider our priorities should be, first, to identify those proposals on which we can add value now. Secondly, we should determine those areas where we can add value in the future. Finally, we should seek to establish how we can best support progress to be undertaken by the nuclear-weapons States themselves. We are not looking to constrain work in this Conference by imposing time bindings or tactical linkages on nuclear or conventional weapons. We do not think that is a productive way to proceed. Working for the reasonable middle ground is the only way we want to see progress in addressing all disarmament imperatives. And, we consider it is achievable. It is a challenge that we shall continue to pursue.

While we have stalled in our tracks so far this year, the appointment of the four special coordinators are steps that should not be undervalued. This is a good moment for us to revisit issues such as membership, functions and the agenda. This Conference has to come to grips also with what it can realistically achieve on landmines. With the appointment of the four special coordinators, we know that these issues are in capable hands and I look forward to cooperating with them. I wish to touch on some of these institutional aspects today.

On improved and effective functioning, let me say at the outset, as others have done, that it would be wrong to confuse any review of procedures with the separate question of membership. Similarly, consideration of wider membership should not be predicated by concerns over functioning. That would result in the tail wagging the dog. Certainly, the Conference on Disarmament is having to adjust to its increased size, but we are confident this is manageable and will be in the future. If our procedures are not capable of delivering our outcomes, then we should not hesitate to change them. This is in our gift. The issue of consensus, however, appears to be set in concrete in this Conference. Whether it is possible to make a distinction between procedural issues and those of substance is clearly problematic. The only way to do so would be to define the parameters in each case and then design a more flexible formula for dealing with procedural decision-making. We would agree with others that the problems we have seen so far this year are as much matters of policy difference as shortcomings in our system of operation. But, that cannot be the excuse for avoiding the search for innovative alternatives. The problems we face are not unique. New Zealand wishes to see NGOs participate in this Conference to the fullest extent possible. While some might argue that the present arrangements are not unreasonable, we would welcome greater input from NGO delegations. New Zealand is amongst those countries which already consult widely and productively with these organizations. There are some other matters of process on which I would like to comment. For example, we would not be opposed to time limits on speeches. We do not, however, see the need to constrain ourselves by adopting motions of closure. Open-ended consultations are proving to be valuable because they enhance transparency, but one wonders whether this setting is conducive to informality. I join others in asking whether there is not a more suitable room for these consultations where we can at least see each other. With respect to the role of the presidency, we believe the present term is fine. More important, however, is that the powers of the presidency appear to have become eroded. We would strongly support moves for these to be restored. We would go further in suggesting that the President should have the right, for example, on a "best endeavours" basis, to consult parties with widely differing views in an effort to facilitate a consensual outcome.

New Zealand has warmly welcomed the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations. We are encouraged by his clarification that the July package of proposals in the disarmament area are designed to jump-start one of the United Nations' more important areas of activity. Indeed, we would have wished to see more far-reaching reforms proposed in this area. There is much for member States to work through before the start of the next General Assembly session. And we must also start thinking about the future work of this Conference in the light of the reform process. This body should look also at implementing output-driven reforms. And it should take the initiative rather than wait to have the changes imposed from outside. When one looks at our group structures, there are few who would not acknowledge that we are operating with machinery from a bygone age. We are not suggesting this should be dismantled forthwith, but let us not rule out change. Our experience with group consultations is that they are extremely valuable. Other, so-called like-minded, groups will operate independently and do so successfully. Inevitably, like-mindedness in disarmament will differ on an issue-by-issue basis. But there is no reason why this Conference and its President should not recognize the existence of other coalitions on occasions when they themselves wish to speak collectively.

On questions relating to our agenda, we would want to join calls to reshape this into a generic format and one that is more durable in time. Do we really need to revisit the agenda every year when our programme of work also allows us to set priorities for our sessions on an annual basis? Disarmament issues are not resolved in tidy annual packages, nor is this a factory for mass-producing treaties. We would be keen to explore the adoption of a thematic and balanced agenda which has a longer lifespan and can deliver the necessary flexibility for us to get on with the real work.

New Zealand considers also that this Conference should take more fully into account consensus-driven calls for action from the United Nations General Assembly. Our rules and procedures require this, yet we seem to be immune to this expectation. We should address this shortcoming in a more responsible way and in a manner that is in step with today's world. This leads me to wonder whether the Conference should consider becoming pro-active in explaining its business to the wider community. There is an image problem to be addressed and this is an organization that is not as widely understood or as appreciated as it should be, I suggest.

Turning to the consideration of future membership, I want to reiterate that New Zealand fully supports the principle that this should be open-ended. We do not hold to notions of what may or may not be the optimum size. The Conference on Disarmament cannot claim representational exclusivity when it is dealing with issues that are global. We would support further consideration of how enlargement might reasonably be managed, perhaps in a phased way. We would be opposed to preconditions being made. But it is not unreasonable that we should ensure a representative geographical mix. We should bear in mind, too, the expectation that applicants have demonstrated a commitment to the work of this Conference. And, in our considerations, we should be mindful of the dates of existing applications.

I want to take this opportunity today to reflect on the question of landmines. New Zealand is one of many countries, both within this Conference and outside it, that is committed to the Ottawa Process. This process has real momentum behind it. And it meets the overwhelming international imperative for early action: something this Conference, unfortunately, has been unable to deliver. The Ottawa treaty will open the window for considering other action on landmines in the future. We are open-minded as to how this might be pursued, either as an annex to the treaty, or in the context of the Inhumane Weapons Convention or within this Conference. We shall await with interest the interim report from the Special Coordinator and any recommendations that may be made for further consideration of this issue in the CD itself. In considering what role this body might play in the future, we must ensure that it will reinforce and not dilute in any way the ban on landmines. Any action must be consistent with, and not merely "complementary" to, the Ottawa treaty. There would be strong objections from within this chamber and from outside should any subsequent action in the CD have the effect of undermining the Ottawa treaty or its humanitarian imperatives. Options that might offer the convenience of à la carte solutions are not the way to proceed, we believe, and could risk undermining the integrity of this body. Finally, while we have problems to resolve and challenges that we cannot avoid, this body has proved in the past that it can meet these. New Zealand is not pessimistic about its future. My appointment as New Zealand's first Ambassador for Disarmament is evidence of that commitment and that confidence.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of New Zealand for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq, Ambassador Al-Tikriti.

Mr. AL-TIKRITI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, allow me at the outset to offer you my best wishes for success in your high office. We have full confidence in your skill and wisdom, and our delegation will cooperate closely to ensure the success of the proceedings.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the former Presidents of the Conference on their praiseworthy efforts to move our work forward. I would also like to welcome the distinguished Ambassadors of Chile and New Zealand. The Conference will certainly benefit from their wisdom and experience and from their valuable contribution to our work in the CD. I wish to assure them of my delegation's cooperation to ensure the smooth progress of the CD, whose success is of importance to us all. I wish the distinguished Ambassadors who have left us every success in both their public and private lives. Our Conference greatly appreciates their outstanding contributions and achievements.

Given the developments in international relations in the last decade and the beginning of the current decade, all members of the international community must recognize that it is essential for all States to participate on an equal footing in promoting the common interests of mankind. Their participation must be based on the provisions of the United Nations Charter, the rules of international law and the principles of justice and equity. The achievement of that goal unquestionably depends on the adoption of measures to promote disarmament on an equitable and objective basis that guarantees the natural rights of States to security, peace and respect for their sovereignty and independence.

Our Conference can point to two major achievements in the recent past: the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. Despite the great difficulties and challenges which confronted the Conference during that period, a steadfast determination and desire to succeed overcame the difficulties and challenges and the Conference took a giant step forward on the path towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear disarmament. We are fully confident that the Conference on Disarmament can make further progress along that path if the disinterested political will to do so exists. The international community has placed its confidence in this Conference and we must take care not to undermine that confidence. While the serious nature of the Conference and the wisdom and experience of its members inspire us with optimism, the amount of time wasted since the beginning of the session in argument and discussion without reaching agreement on the programme of work fills us with disappointment and regret. I agree with my colleagues who have described it as a dialogue of the deaf, because since the beginning of the session we have only been able to adopt the agenda and appoint the four special coordinators. Although that was a step forward, it falls short of the Conference's aspirations and abilities. The time has come for the Conference to take its responsibilities more seriously and we are confident of achieving the desired results if, as I said, the disinterested political will to do so exists.

With regard to the programme of work of the Conference, our delegation forms part of the Group of 21 which submitted the proposal contained in document CD/1462 of 5 June 1997. We view the proposal as a commendable move by the Group to facilitate the proceedings and as a sound basis for agreement. Our delegation is pleased to state that we are willing to work with all parties, keeping an open mind and motivated by a desire to advance the cause of world peace for the benefit of all. But we also feel that the text should be acceptable, practical and balanced and take account of the views and concerns of all Conference members, since this would create an atmosphere of trust and thwart the efforts of those who are endeavouring to obstruct the work of the Conference on Disarmament and prevent it from achieving the lofty goals for which it was established.

Iraq considers that the priorities established in the Final Document of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, are still valid. That historic document gave top priority to nuclear disarmament, since nuclear weapons constitute the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. The nuclear States parties to the NPT bear a special responsibility in that area, and our delegation therefore strongly supports the establishment of the committee which is to be responsible for agenda item 1, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". We are aware, given the depth and scope of this subject, that the desired results cannot be attained overnight. However, the establishment of this committee is, in our view, the first step towards achieving a convention on comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

Iraq considers that a pragmatic approach should be adopted to disarmament issues, particularly the issue of comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Moreover, as the collective security of States is indissociable from the goal of world peace, the Conference should give more attention to issues relating to international security within a new framework and on the basis of effective measures. The various aspects of international peace and security are to be achieved through disarmament and confidence-building measures, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a global project encompassing all States belonging to different regions with the aim of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world in accordance with article VII of the NPT.

The Middle East is one of the regions that the international community is trying to free from the nuclear nightmare and from all weapons of mass destruction in accordance with General Assembly resolutions and paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which provides for the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and all missiles for their delivery. Although more than six years have passed since the adoption of this resolution, we have seen no serious move or action to implement this paragraph.

As I have already said, our view of the issue of comprehensive nuclear disarmament is realistic, open-minded and impartial. Pending achievement of this lofty humanitarian goal, we view the provision of unconditional security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States as one of the main concerns of the peoples and States in the latter category. Indeed, it represents the minimum requirement of the non-nuclear-weapon States. Once this goal is achieved, the Conference must press ahead with its tasks. The States in question have a fair and legitimate right to demand such guarantees, having voluntarily renounced the nuclear option when the NPT came into force in 1968. But the nuclear-weapon States have not fulfilled their obligations under article VI of the Treaty, contenting themselves with unilateral statements. If we examine such statements from the legal point of view, we find them unreliable, inadequate, fundamentally unstable and non-binding in legal terms. Furthermore, they are all conditional and add nothing new to the principle of individual and collective self-defence laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) have not provided a practical solution capable of dispelling the fears and doubts of the non-nuclear-weapon States regarding their security. The two resolutions merely provide positive assurances, most of which are already contained in the Charter of the United Nations. Our delegation therefore thinks that the time has come for the Conference on Disarmament to take a serious, objective and impartial look at the subject and to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee with a view to negotiating a binding and verifiable instrument under which nuclear-weapon States would undertake to refrain from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Another key issue is the arms race in outer space. In that connection, I wish to refer to resolution 51/44 adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on prevention of an arms race in outer space and concentration on peaceful uses of outer space. The resolution requests the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space with a negotiating mandate with a view to conducting negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. My country supports the re-establishment of this committee as soon as possible.

Another issue that has begun to attract the attention of the Conference on Disarmament since becoming a talking point in other forums and in the media is that of anti-personnel landmines. I am not here to present a detailed account of the excruciating pain and suffering that have been inflicted by such mines in different countries, and also in our own region, the Middle East, which contains almost half the total number of mines laid throughout the world. The delegation of Iraq believes that this issue cannot be approached in any realistic way without clearly specifying the humanitarian goals and national interests of States as priorities that call for comprehensive disarmament measures. Otherwise, the banning and elimination of mines will remain an unattainable goal and subject to selective interpretations based on circumstantial considerations.

For the adoption of an international instrument, it is essential to specify clearly ways and means of eliminating mines. Moreover, the instrument must be binding on all States, particularly those with large and highly developed industrial and military facilities, in order to control the production and exportation of anti-personnel landmines and prevent their proliferation throughout the world. Those countries must also be involved in their destruction and eradication since they possess the necessary technology and experience and are therefore in a position to offer their assistance, a move that would greatly facilitate the negotiations. The practical implementation of such an international instrument would involve various measures such as the preparation of detailed plans of mined areas and sites, the categories of mines involved and the laying procedures. This preparatory work would facilitate the handling and clearance of mines by means of the advanced detection and clearance technology possessed by a small number of States.

In 1991 Iraq was the victim of a large-scale invasion from which it inherited a large number of mines laid on its territory and coasts. As is known, certain parties tried to clear the mines from part of Iraq's territory, not for purely humanitarian reasons as announced at the time but for overtly political reasons. The invasion left behind an enormous number of unexploded anti-personnel mines. We have been providing the United Nations with details of these mines since 1992. The Iraqi authorities are trying to destroy them because they have claimed many lives among our people and severely damaged their livelihood. This has been confirmed by the report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme in Iraq published on 3 April 1996, which stated that landmines have adversely affected agriculture and the daily lives of the Iraqi people.

An international ban on anti-personnel landmines cannot come about through unilateral statements by just a few States. There is a need for the establishment of rules which are consistent with international law applicable in this area. Due regard must also be paid to the circumstances prevailing in different regions, many of which are still involved in conflicts and subject to domination, influence and threats of the use of force against their countries and peoples. The assistance in mine-clearing provided by the United Nations is useful but should involve close coordination with the national authorities in the countries concerned and should not undermine their national security or be used to achieve political aims that were not included among the objectives set forth in United Nations resolutions on the matter.

With regard to the ban on fissile materials, we join other delegations in expressing the view that any convention adopted in the future on this subject should cover the production, acquisition and storage of such materials and should contain a definition of fissile materials consistent with that in article 20, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and specify the armament activities and explosive devices using fissile materials that are to be prohibited with a view to halting the production, acquisition and storage of such materials in nuclear and non-nuclear States. In addition, my delegation considers that the ban on fissile materials used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons should include materials with an enrichment of 20 per cent or above, and that it should cover currently stored materials and future production of such materials for either military or civilian purposes in excess of one kilogram. The materials should be placed under Agency surveillance to prevent their reutilization for military purposes.

We also wish to stress the need for a highly developed international surveillance, verification and safety system, to be implemented by a specialized body associated with the International Atomic Energy Agency and applying the safeguards of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), following the declaration of all stocks of fissile materials in the facilities of nuclear-weapon States and States with advanced nuclear programmes with a view to determining the fate of fissile materials stemming from the dismantling of nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices or as yet unused materials. Attention must be paid to fissile materials to ensure that they are used for peaceful purposes throughout the world. The convention should be binding on all States parties, whether or not they are also parties to the NPT. It should also be non-discriminatory, multilateral and universal, and should be provided with effective means of verification. My delegation views this convention as a component of the time-bound programme for the removal and destruction of all nuclear weapons.

Transparency is vitally important and more than necessary in the case of disarmament measures, since it helps to build confidence and dispel excessive doubts. To be effective and comprehensive, such action must follow the correct path, since transparency relates not only to the transfer of conventional weapons but also to non-conventional weapons. As everybody knows, the issue of transparency is closely related to concerns of national security and its preservation, particularly since an impartial observer will not find a single region of the world that is entirely free from tension and conflict. National interest and the acquisition of weapons for self-defence are among the main concerns that affect the positions adopted by countries when it comes to honouring their obligations with respect to disarmament and that determine the degree of frankness and transparency that they reflect. The United Nations Register, relating to conventional arms only, which was established by General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, on which Iraq abstained, does not, in our view, meet the security requirements of some countries, particularly in regions where tensions exist, and does not dispel their fears. On the contrary, it intensifies their fears and concerns because a high degree of transparency is in some respects incompatible with national security interests, particularly where there is a major qualitative discrepancy in the categories of weapons - especially nuclear weapons - held by some parties in those regions. This is ultimately conducive to imbalance in terms of demands for transparency and openness because of the lack of balance among the parties in the region where tensions exist.

Iraq, whose implementation of Security Council resolutions concerning weapons of mass destruction was an example of transparency since it presented regular systematic data and statements concerning activities related to such weapons, considers that the measures provided for in the resolution on transparency in the field of disarmament cannot be viewed as a set of effective international measures designed to protect the security of States, enhance their independence and sovereignty, and avert the danger of war and conflict. Accordingly, Iraq, in view of its national security concerns and in the light of its experience, demands that all neighbouring countries in the Middle East comply with the principle of transparency by declaring all their weapons, including weapons of mass destruction and missiles for their delivery.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to mention another important issue, namely the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament. We support steps to open up the Conference to all candidates, since its expansion would broaden the basis of representation so as to reflect the existing membership of the United Nations. However, this move should not impair the general quality and efficiency of the Conference proceedings, which stem from a careful and scrupulous approach to the process of selection and observance of agreed rules and guidelines. In this connection, we welcome the appointment of the Special Coordinator for expansion of membership, the Ambassador of Austria, and wish him success in his work. We trust that he will complete his consultations and present his proposals for a balanced expansion of the membership of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador Campbell.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): Madam President, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and on your very commendable efforts to re-energize our Conference for the important tasks it faces. You can rightly claim to have made progress with the appointment of four special coordinators at the end of our second session. As one of those special coordinators, I would like to take this opportunity to present a progress report on my consultations with member States, this in pursuit of the mandate given me by the Conference.

Since my appointment on 26 June I have held over 40 bilateral meetings with members of the Conference on Disarmament. I appreciate the time my colleagues have made available to me as I appreciate the openness with which they have discussed the issues. In my meetings with colleagues I have outlined what I see as the four possible options for dealing with the question of APLs in the CD through the establishment of an ad hoc committee.

The first of these options is a comprehensive mandate which would have the CD endorse the objective of working towards an effective global ban on landmines and undertake work on the various aspects of such a ban - production, use, transfers and stockpiles - simultaneously. The Japanese/Hungarian mandate submitted to the Conference early this year is representative of the kind of mandate that might be considered with this objective in mind.

The second alternative, second option, is a comprehensive mandate which affirms an effective global ban as the ultimate objective, but agrees to undertake work towards this goal in a phased or step-by-step approach. The mandate submitted to this Conference by the United Kingdom delegation earlier this year best approximates this objective. A variant of this approach could allow the ad hoc committee, once established, to determine the manner and order in which it would tackle the various aspects of a ban.

A third possible mandate is one which involves a strictly partial approach to the APL problem and would have the Conference establish an ad hoc committee to look at discrete issues such as export, import and transfers and/or verification. Such a mandate would not include a chapeau which had the Conference agree that the total elimination of landmines was its ultimate objective.

The fourth possible mandate is really no mandate at all in the sense that it would have the CD agree to establish an ad hoc committee simply to review and discuss the world situation regarding landmines. I have detected no convergence in support of this option nor is it one which I believe is appropriate for an institution charged with negotiation rather than deliberation, but it is an alternative that has to be considered.

As was only to be expected, the delegations that I have met thus far have expressed a range of views, and as there are still a number of delegations with which I have not yet formally discussed the issue, I am not in a position at this stage to make any recommendation to the Conference.

I have also discussed with delegations the timing of any CD action on landmines. There are some delegations who have expressed the view to me that it would be desirable for the CD to take some decisions on a possible mandate before the end of this current session, but allowing for substantive work to begin only in the new year. Other delegations have pointed out to me the difficulty of the CD taking any decision on a mandate during this its third and last session for obvious reasons, that is, we have little time left to discuss the issue and we have to devote attention to our annual report. Other delegations have pointed out to me, and this is a view that I share personally, that there is little point in the CD taking any decisions on a possible mandate on landmines until the outcome of the Ottawa Process is known in December.

I have no sense that there is any feeling amongst delegations that the CD is in competition with that process, the Ottawa Process, which will take a further step forward when negotiations on a draft treaty commence in Oslo in September. Rather, I have the feeling that delegations would wish to see the outcome of that process before final decisions on how the CD may complement the outcomes of Ottawa, consistent both with the Ottawa treaty outcome itself and consistent with the CD's mandate and status as the international community's standing arms control negotiating body. On the other hand, I have not encountered any opposition from so-called pro-Ottawa delegations to the CD taking up the question of landmines in an appropriate way in a post-Ottawa environment.

This is as much as I have to report at this stage. I am continuing my consultations with a view to completing an initial round of discussion with all States members of the CD within the next two weeks. I note that one regional group has urged me to undertake informal open-ended consultations. At this stage, I believe it is premature for me to do so. I have not ruled out such consultations but I need to have the opportunity to finish the individual discussions with States members. I do, however, agree to make myself available to the regional groups themselves should they wish to discuss the issues with me.

It is my intention to make a further report on my efforts to fulfil my mandate as APL Special Coordinator later in this third session, but I foreshadow that it will most likely be another interim report when I expect I will be seeking the Conference's agreement for me to continue my consultations in the inter-sessional period, that is, between the end of this year's CD session and the commencement of our first session in the new year with a view to my presenting a final report early in our first session in 1998.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan, Mr. Volkov.

Mr. VOLKOV (Kazakhstan) (translated from Russian): Madam President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on taking up the post of President and on your discharge of the high-level and responsible functions entrusted to you. On behalf of the delegation of my country I would like to assure you of my full support.

Today I should like to take this opportunity to inform this august assembly of a statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan in connection with a governmental decree dated 6 August 1997, whereby Kazakhstan declared a ban on the export of anti-personnel landmines, including re-export and transit. Kazakhstan shares the growing concern of the international community at the huge losses caused among the civilian population through the use of anti-personnel mines. In over 70 different countries, 110 million mines are still maiming and killing the civilian population every day. That is why anti-personnel mines have been dubbed delayed-action weapons of mass destruction. This serious problem, which is worldwide in scope, can only find a solution through joint international action to limit the use of anti-personnel mines and access to them, and in due course to forbid their use. The unilateral moratorium introduced by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan provides support for the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and is an expression of our country's commitment to the cause of strengthening international peace and security.

I would request the secretariat of the Conference to distribute the statement by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject of anti-personnel landmines as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to take this opportunity of speaking to the Conference on Disarmament today to inform this august assembly that, in pursuance of the process which was begun in February this year in Almaty - I am referring to the Almaty Declaration adopted at the meeting of the Presidents of five Central Asian States proclaiming the movement and the path - the aim of creating a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia - by way of a practical step, an international conference on problems associated with the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is to be held in Kazakhstan from 8 to 12 September this year, to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Semipalatinsk test site. The conference will open on 8 September in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan, and will then continue its work in the city of Kurchatov in Semipalatinsk district, which is where the Semipalatinsk test site used to operate.

The agenda of this international conference includes such issues as the role of international and regional treaties and agreements in guaranteeing the non-proliferation regime, the activities of international organizations intended to support the non-proliferation regime, the system of international guarantees, support for the regime of non-proliferation in the CIS countries, and the last, concluding issue is the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The conference will be of a practical, scientific nature. Over a period of four days, the representatives of more than 30 countries in the city of Kurchatov will have an opportunity to participate in visits to the facilities at the former Semipalatinsk test site, hear reports and discussions on practical measures to support the non-proliferation regime, consider the issue of conversion of nuclear testing sites and their infrastructure and assess the effects of nuclear testing on the environment.

Today I would also like to note and express the special satisfaction of the delegation of Kazakhstan and congratulate the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of the post of Special Coordinator on the question of expansion of the membership of the CD and express our special support for the Ambassador of Austria, Mr. Kreid, who has been appointed to that high-level and responsible post. The delegation of Kazakhstan also considers that in the very near future all the member countries of the CD as well as States with observer status that play an active part in this work will have to accept the obvious need for political and practical support for two parallel processes - the Ottawa process and the Geneva process - not just in respect of anti-personnel mines, to note their positive achievements and, for the sake of the single goal of disarmament and the strengthening of security, to move forward in the run-up to the major conference to be held in Oslo, in Norway.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, I wish to thank the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia, for his progress report presented at today's meeting. Our delegation wishes to reserve the right to present its comments and remarks on this report after having studied it carefully.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. I have no further speakers on my list for today. Do other delegations wish to take the floor at this stage?

In the light of South Africa's decision to waive its right to preside over the Conference, in accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure, during the period from 18 August to 31 December 1997, and the information received from the representative of Spain to the effect that his country is not in a position to occupy the Chair for that period, and taking account also of the readiness of the delegation of Sri Lanka to shoulder this responsibility, and following intensive consultations, I conclude that the representative of Sri Lanka will take the Chair of the Conference from 18 August until 31 December 1997. This means that the post of President of the Conference for the next session in 1998 will be taken by the following countries: Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I would now like to pass on to you a few comments as Slovakia's term is drawing to an end. At the time when I took up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament last June, following on from my friend Ambassador Absa Diallo of Senegal, I was aware of the complexity of the tasks that lay ahead of me and of the particularly difficult situation. I must confess that I had mixed feelings, but above all a great deal of respect for this post. I took the Chair with a firm resolve not to spare any effort to find possible solutions and generally acceptable compromises. Sustained efforts to develop consensus on how to handle the agenda of the Conference were made throughout this period. I myself made use of every opportunity in order to try to move our work forward in this field. Unfortunately, all these efforts have not yet produced a result because of persistent basic differences as to the priority attached by different parties to the items on the Conference's agenda. At the same time, thanks to the efforts of my predecessors in this post and the support and cooperation of all delegations, we were able to designate four special coordinators on anti-personnel mines, the review of the Conference's agenda, the expansion of the Conference and the improved and effective functioning of the CD. We have all witnessed the business-like spirit and energy with which our four coordinators got down to work. The intensification of their consultations, both bilateral and multilateral, and the obvious readiness of delegations to cooperate in this regard, point to progress in the near future. I wish them every success.

I wish to convey to you all how grateful I am for the cooperation and support that you have given me during my term. I must confess that there were difficult moments when I was extremely appreciative for your kind support and encouragement. It was a great honour for me to preside over this distinguished body. My thanks go in particular to the group coordinators and the representative of China, who always supported my efforts to secure progress in our substantive work and unfailingly stood ready to assist. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all the secretariat for their dedication and efficiency. My thanks go to the interpreters for their excellent work. It only remains for me to wish Ambassador Bernard Goonetilleke of Sri Lanka, my successor in the Chair, a great deal of success in his task and assure him of my full cooperation.

I would like to remind you before adjourning this plenary meeting that the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, will be holding informal open-ended consultations in this room immediately after this plenary meeting. I would also like to inform you that the Special Coordinator on expansion of the membership of the Conference, Ambassador Kreid, will hold informal open-ended consultations on Tuesday, 19 August at 10 a.m. in this room, and that the Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda, Ambassador Náray, will hold informal open-ended consultations on the same day at 3 p.m. in this room.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 21 August at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

ONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.775
21 August 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 21 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 775th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like at the outset to extend, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to the newly appointed representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Ian Soutar, who is attending the plenary meeting of the Conference for the first time today. Ambassador Soutar brings with him rich experience on matters before this Conference. Suffice it to say that he was for three years Assistant Head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Department of the Foreign Office. I am sure the Conference will extend to him its full cooperation and support.

I should now like to make some opening remarks at the start of the Sri Lankan presidency of the Conference.

As you are aware, the 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament will come to an end with the presidency of Sri Lanka. This being the situation, the CD has to take stock of the work it has done during the course of its deliberations in 1997 and prepare its report to the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly, which is due to begin approximately a month from now.

Prior to my assumption of responsibilities of the presidency, several colleagues of mine inquired from me what plans I have to conduct the work of the Conference during my tenure. Having sat through the formal and informal meetings of the CD during the current session and noting the progress of our work, or, to be precise, the lack of it, and the remaining time available to the CD, it was not difficult for me to respond to that question. According to rule 44 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, it should begin consideration of its draft report to the General Assembly of the United Nations at least two weeks before the end of the session. This gives the Conference not more than one week to consider the substantive issues before it. We, therefore, simply do not have time to cover fresh ground.

Delegations are perfectly aware how the Conference proceeded during the first two parts of the current session. During this period, some delegations made repeated attempts to begin our work seriously and earnestly. In this process a number of documents were submitted to the CD by those delegations, both individually and collectively. Although the Conference was unable to resolve the problems it encountered in the process, these contributions remain as sentinels to remind us of the attempts made by us to overcome the difficulties we have encountered. They will also serve as the institutional memory of the CD to guide our way in the years to come. Consequently, we should not be discouraged thinking that we have wasted one whole year of the time allotted to the CD.

Looking at the situation the Conference is facing today, we have to be mindful of several aspects. The first and foremost is the fact that the CD is the sole multilateral negotiating body responsible for disarmament matters. Speaking of our negotiating mandate, Sir Michael Weston, the former Ambassador of the United Kingdom, in his farewell statement reminded us of the fact that negotiation can begin only when the climate is propitious for such an endeavour. If there is no meeting of minds representing the entirety of the CD membership, there is no prospect for negotiation on any issue, whether they fall into the category of nuclear disarmament, conventional arms or any other specific area of interest. However, we must accept the fact that negotiation cannot begin in a vacuum. Prior to serious negotiations, identification of subjects should take place. That should be followed by a process of consultation ending up with agreement on the parameters of negotiation to be conducted. Past experience has taught us that even after going through this process, negotiation may not take place until such time as there is a consensus to commence negotiation.

Another related factor is that the CD is not an institution that can conduct negotiations continuously year after year, and produce international instruments as if they are coming out of an automated factory. The long duration of time taken by the CD to agree to start negotiations on the CWC and the CTBT is an example of how time-consuming such decisions can be.

However, the CD cannot and must not wait motionless for situations to evolve on their own. The Conference can be pro-active and prepare itself for future negotiations by undertaking consultations and preparing the ground for such work. For example, while negotiations were under way on a CTBT, consultations were carried out by Ambassador Shannon of Canada with a view to reaching agreement on an FMCT. I have referred to this particular instance only as an example of how consultations on issues considered important by the Conference were carried out, while serious negotiations were also being conducted on a CTBT. It is my sincere hope that the CD will proceed in this manner when it begins its 1998 session.

The second aspect is the method of our decision-making. In keeping with the rules of procedure of the CD, all substantive decisions are taken by consensus. There are critics of this process. However, taking into consideration the nature of our work, it has to be admitted that decisions through another process would be difficult. That being the case, delegations have to accept the fact that without a consensus, no important decision can be taken by the CD. In view of this reality, delegations cannot afford to be overambitious or attempt to force decisions on the Conference and expect such moves to succeed. How should we then proceed? In my opinion, the Conference should be ready to conduct negotiations when such a move is feasible. Meanwhile, consultations should continue on other subjects with a view to bringing them to maturity, or, in other words, to a stage where negotiations will be possible.

The third point is the autonomous character of the Conference. This has led some delegations to maintain that the CD is the master of its house. However, on certain occasions, the CD seems to have accepted the fact that it should heed the calls made by the international community. The CTBT was one such example. There is a reason for this position. For every delegation represented in the Conference, roughly speaking, there are two other delegations out there. The CD is neither self-funded, nor is it conducting business for its own exclusive use. It is the international community as a whole which is the eventual beneficiary of our deliberations. It is the international community whom we expect to support our endeavours and accept the final products that come out of this body in the form of international instruments. We should, therefore, not consider ourselves as a totally independent entity. Instead, we have to conduct ourselves as master craftsmen entrusted with a specific function by the international community. In the circumstances, while we make attempts to project our national views and protect our national interests, we have also to be mindful of the responsibilities given to us by the international community and our obligations towards it. It is against this background we should ask ourselves whether we have discharged the responsibilities reposed on us diligently. In 1998, are we going to conduct our business in the same manner as was done in 1997? I hope "no" will be the answer.

The Conference has exhausted one whole year attempting to decide on the programme of work for 1997. Even after reaching an agreement on the agenda, we have failed to reach any decision on the specific item or items that can be taken up for negotiation by the Conference. In the circumstances, it is rather disheartening to hear, during the informal consultations on Tuesday 19, delegations repeating their often stated positions without due regard to the existing situation in the CD.

The answer to our problem cannot be found by dividing the agenda into two or three broad areas such as nuclear disarmament, conventional disarmament, etc. and consigning all subjects into two or three separate baskets. As the delegations are well aware, despite its shortcomings, we have adopted an agenda. Our problem was more related to the work programme, or to be precise, our inability to treat separately items that are ripe for negotiation and those other items which require further consultation. The problem lies in our inability to appreciate the preoccupations of each other and the failure to be accommodating to the extent possible, in the common interest of mankind.

Towards the end of the second part of our session in June, there was a ray of hope that the CD would re-establish one or more ad hoc committees and even establish another ad hoc committee. Although we were unable to lock on to that opportunity, I am optimistic that in 1998 the Conference will be able to take a quick decision on the matter and commence negotiations as early as possible. Meanwhile, consultations can be held to narrow the differences on other agenda items. If the Conference can reach such an understanding during this session, we can jointly take pride that the era of polemics and rhetoric is behind us and the CD will face the year 1998 with justifiable confidence. With that optimistic note, I would like to conclude my opening remarks.

I should now like to invite the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, to make a statement.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I have asked for the floor in order to bring to the attention of the Conference the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, regarding the decision of the United States to participate in the Ottawa Process negotiations on a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines and his expectations from our Conference in this regard. The statement reads as follows:

> "The Secretary-General welcomes the announcement that the United States will participate in the Ottawa Process negotiations on a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. He is convinced that such a treaty is urgently needed to put an end to the enormous suffering caused every day by this indiscriminate weapon. The action by the United States comes at a critical moment, as arrangements are being made to open formal negotiations in Oslo on 1 September. The Secretary-General hopes that the Oslo conference will succeed in concluding a truly comprehensive ban, which will come to the General Assembly for endorsement at its coming session. He looks forward to opening the treaty for signature in Ottawa this December.
>
> "The Secretary-General of the United Nations also hopes that there will be progress in the parallel efforts being made in the Conference on Disarmament to achieve universality of a total ban on these horrific weapons."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, for his statement. I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of the United States of America. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Mr. President, at the outset of my statement, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency and wish you every success in the performance of your important duties. You may count on the United States delegation's fullest cooperation. As you yourself have noted in your introductory remarks, among these duties we hope will include setting the stage for a more fruitful year in 1998, and your remarks certainly indicate that you will spare no efforts to try to set the proper stage. You may count, in that context, on the United States delegation's fullest cooperation.

I take the floor this morning briefly to note formally the United States policy decision concerning anti-personnel landmines, which the White House announced earlier this week.

President Clinton has made clear his firm commitment to conclude as soon as possible a comprehensive worldwide agreement banning the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines (APLs). To that end, the United States has been working in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to initiate negotiations on a ban that could secure the widest possible adherence. In that context, we welcomed the appointment of a Special

Coordinator on APLs and hope that his efforts will pave the way for early agreement to establish an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines in the Conference on Disarmament.

At the same time, the United States notes that support for the Ottawa Process has grown significantly. We want to take advantage of the momentum behind the Ottawa Process and help build on the support it already has. Thus, as you know, the White House announced on 18 August that the United States will actively participate in the Ottawa Process negotiations which begin on 1 September in Oslo. The objective of those negotiations is to conclude a treaty text for signing in December. We will work to secure an agreement that achieves our humanitarian goals while protecting our national security interests.

Let me stress that we remain committed to the establishment of step-by-step negotiations towards a global ban in the CD. That effort remains essential since the CD's membership includes most of the major historical producers and exporters of APLs, a number of whom have said they will not participate in the Oslo negotiations nor sign any treaty that results from those negotiations.

The United States will also continue our efforts to ratify the CCW Amended Mines Protocol and urge others to do the same. That Protocol, if adhered to, could make a significant contribution to resolving the landmines problem, especially when added to other international efforts to curb these "weapons of mass destruction in slow motion".

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the Ambassador of Nigeria.

Mr. ABUAH (Nigeria): Mr. President, let me warmly welcome you to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, particularly at this stage in the 1997 calendar of the CD. We would like to assure you that this delegation will extend all the cooperation you deserve to assure the success of your work. Let me, more or less in the same breath, commend Ambassador Krasnohorská, the distinguished Ambassador of Slovakia, your predecessor, for her invaluable contribution to the CD process.

It will be recalled that not too long ago the Group of 21 submitted a proposal contained in document CD/1462 which contained certain elements which have been crying out for re-establishment of mechanisms, in this case the ad hoc committees, to take them a stage forward. In this regard, the Group noted that certain delegations had asked for time to consult with their respective capitals as to how to proceed with the requests, the proposals, of the Group of 21. In the intervention of this delegation on behalf of the Group of 21 on the 7th of this month, the question was put through you to those delegations whether they were in a position at that point in time to let the Conference benefit from the results of the consultations with the respective capitals. I have the honour again to ask the Conference through you whether these delegations are now ready today, in this Conference, at this plenary, to let us benefit from the instructions they have received. The idea is that work on these committees can go forward.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Nigeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I have asked for the floor not at this stage to respond to the statement of the distinguished representative of Nigeria, but merely to, if I may, first congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency, Sir, and, secondly, to thank you and through you the members of the Conference for your very kind words of welcome, and, thirdly, to say that I look forward with pleasure to working with the members of the Conference on the important tasks which face us and which you, if I may say so, set out so succinctly in your opening remarks.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all allow me to convey to you the cordial congratulations of my delegation and express the conviction that under your expert and efficient chairmanship this Conference will make important progress. The statement you made impressed me a great deal and I believe that it is built on the basis of wisdom and my delegation would like the text to be distributed *in extenso* as soon as possible to delegations. At the same time, my delegation expresses its gratitude to the Ambassador of Slovakia, who discharged her duties in a vigorous and devoted manner at the helm of the Conference. We are indebted to her. My delegation also wishes to extend a very cordial welcome to the new representative of the United Kingdom, and of course to tell him that we are very willing to work with him in order to attain the objectives of this Conference.

I wish to announce that my Government has decided to participate fully in the Ottawa Process and consequently has subscribed to the Brussels resolution and will be participating in the Oslo conference as a full member. This does not in any way imply that we have changed our view that there is a great task which the Conference on Disarmament must pursue in the future on the issue of anti-personnel mines, a task that we think should be complementary to and consistent with the Ottawa Process and in no way in conflict with it. The objective of universality is a very important objective that we cannot set aside, so that we think, together with many other like-minded delegations, that from next year onwards there could be a very interesting job to be done in this Conference on this very important disarmament issue which of course has a humanitarian aspect of the greatest significance, which causes concern to world public opinion and to Governments, but which also contains other aspects that need to be studied, addressed here in a serious and careful manner so as to ensure the widest possible participation in an agreement which will be universal in scope.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. BENITEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's firm support. Allow me also to congratulate the Ambassador of Slovakia for the way she guided our proceedings during her term of office. I would also like to welcome the new representative of the United Kingdom. The main purpose of my taking the floor was simply to inform you that our country too has subscribed to the Brussels declaration and is preparing to participate in the Oslo meeting. This certainly does not signify a change in our position concerning the need we perceive for the Conference on Disarmament to engage subsequently in work which will complement the results obtained in Ottawa, and we note with great satisfaction that Latin America is united in this endeavour.

The PRESIDENT I thank the representative of Argentina for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage, particularly in relation to the question posed by the Ambassador of Nigeria in his capacity as the Coordinator of the Group of 21? I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor a second time this morning, but I think, in all fairness, we do owe an answer to the question that has been put by the distinguished representative of Nigeria. At the end of the last part of our session, a number of questions were put in a long, two-day plenary regarding the work of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation was among those that pressed at the time for establishment of ad hoc committees on anti-personnel landmines, transparency in armaments and fissile material cut-off. No consensus on those issues was reached. We hope that we can return to these questions soon with a more positive result. Also at the end of the last session, my delegation said that it was not in a position to definitively respond to the question of whether we could agree to the establishment of ad hoc committees on negative security assurances and outer space. I would like to respond to those questions now from the point of view of substance, and in the overall context of the Conference's work and the calendar.

On substance, let me recall that my delegation expressed the view that there was not, nor had there been, an arms race in outer space. Consequently, the agenda item "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" is not in our view accurate, nor is the old mandate for the Ad Hoc Committee that used to exist. You will recall that we made those points in the plenary discussion at the end of the last part of the session, and I had indicated at that time that my delegation had instructions to seek a change in the outer space mandate. Thus, while my delegation has no objection in principle to the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on outer space, it did not agree to do so at this time, prior to addressing the issue of its mandate. I would also like to note that during that plenary discussion other delegations also indicated some concerns with regard to the work of the outer space ad hoc committee and indicated their willingness to consult on this issue. To date, we have held no such consultations, but my delegation is prepared to participate. I would like to further clarify the United States position so that there is no misunderstanding. The United States believes that the existing outer space legal regime has served us well, and there is no evidence there is need for new procedures. We believe that were the Conference to engage on this issue, it should first identify a specific substantive subject in this area that could be discussed. We are not sure what the topic would be.

Turning to the question of negative security assurances, my delegation continues to question what such an ad hoc committee might usefully do, particularly in light of the recent steps already taken by my own Government and others in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 984, on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference and a series of protocols to nuclear-weapon-free zones, the result of which has extended legally binding security guarantees to many parts of the globe.

Turning to the question of the overall context of the CD's work and our calendar, my delegation cannot but ask the question - What is the purpose of establishing these ad hoc committees at this point in time as we prepare to draft our final report to the United Nations General Assembly? For the United States, regardless of the import of the issues, they do not constitute the priority work we see for the Conference on Disarmament. The fissile material cut-off treaty and anti-personnel landmines do. We question what the objective would be in establishing these ad hoc committees at this point in time and whether the point would only be to report to the United Nations that we actually did something. We think that we should be honest and we should have greater respect for ourselves than that. We are not a "make work" body. We do important work when there is agreement to do it. If the object in establishing ad hoc committees now would be to break the logjam, this is indeed a desire we share, but we think the efforts would be better spent at this point in time in laying the groundwork for rapid decisions at the outset of the 1998 session so that we do not face the same problems next year as we do this year. We are prepared, Mr. President, to participate with you in your efforts to try to lay such a groundwork and are encouraged by your willingness to do so in your remarks this morning.

So, in summary, it is not clear to my delegation what the point would be in establishing these two ad hoc committees at this time. We are prepared to work with others to lay the ground for productive work next year. Of course, in our view, the focus should be on APL and FMCT. Transparency in armaments is also of importance to the United States, and we would also look positively at that time on re-establishing the negative security assurances and outer space ad hoc committees, to which we hold no fundamental objections in principle. We would, of course, as I have noted, wish to revisit the question of the outer space ad hoc committee mandate.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on behalf of my country and on my own behalf on taking over the presidency, and to extend my warm thanks to you for having agreed to perform this task in somewhat exceptional and difficult circumstances. We know that with you this Conference will work well. Consequently, following your example, I must respond immediately to the question raised by one of the speakers this morning which, in a way, is addressed to the French delegation, insofar as we were one of those delegations which requested more time on the subject of security assurances in June for purely procedural reasons. We needed to check on the terms of our instructions. Of course, the French authorities are in favour of increasing the number of security assurances. I will not recall here the scale of the guarantees already afforded by my country, whether they be positive or negative, in the latter case through the relevant protocols to treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones which have all been ratified by France, which therefore cover more than 100 countries, but as far as the Conference on Disarmament is concerned, the question was more simply whether an ad hoc committee on security assurances with a mandate drawn up in 1992 was still the order of the day. I can immediately say that we have no objection in principle to the re-establishment of such a committee, nor indeed to the 1992 wording as far as this mandate is concerned.

Having said that, what exactly do we want to do? At this late date, are we trying to paper over the lack of an agreement in the Conference to get down to serious negotiations on a subject that is ripe for them - and there are at least two such subjects - or are we really trying to address a problem? We have the feeling that this is rather more of a bureaucratic procedure intended to puff up artificially our empty balance sheet for this year. This is why we hesitate to use this ploy, because we know that between now and 10 September no serious work can be done. Consequently - and I come back to your introductory statement, Mr. President - we believe that today the Conference needs to consider first and foremost the ways and means of approaching next year in a serious and specific way. There are many ways of doing this. They could involve continued consultations on various subjects, or inter-sessional work on these subjects. They could also involve the attention given to the drafting of its annual report to the United Nations General Assembly, and here I would like to indicate that, within the framework of this report, my delegation would have no objection to the subject of negative security assurances being broached in a positive way.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for her statement and her kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): My predecessor, in one of his last actions as the United Kingdom representative, sought instructions on the point raised by a previous speaker in order that I should have something to contribute to this morning's discussion. I find myself, like the two previous speakers, wondering whether at this stage in the Conference's calendar it is wise to devote resources and energy to the establishment of ad hoc committees on these subjects. Our feeling is that, to take up a point which you made in your opening statement, Mr. President, we should concentrate our efforts at this stage in the session on creating the conditions for a smooth and rapid start to substantive work in this Conference in 1998, and I hope that this work might include enabling the Special Coordinators to pursue their consultations and to present preliminary reports, and I note in this context that the distinguished representative of Australia has already presented a first progress report. Next year, when we come to consider the establishment of ad hoc committees, we shall want to see a balance struck between the Conference's work on nuclear issues on the one hand and conventional issues on the other. For our part, I can confirm that the United Kingdom would like to see the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament reflect our key priorities on the disarmament agenda, and for the record I confirm that on the nuclear side, our top priority is the urgent negotiation and conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty, and on the conventional side, our top priority is to work towards the global ban on APLs to complement the Ottawa treaty, which we hope will be opened for signature this December.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I had not meant to take the floor today, but I am happy to do so under your presidency, Sir, and take this opportunity to congratulate you on taking this responsibility at a time when we are still, as we have been throughout this year, in a rather fragile situation. But do accept my delegation's assurances of cooperation with you during your presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor for her untiring efforts in trying to get a programme of work established by this Conference. At the same time, may I also welcome our new members, particularly the new Ambassador of the United Kingdom, to what has been called perhaps one of the most exclusive clubs in Geneva? We look forward to working with him.

The reason I am taking the floor is to set on record what our priority is. This has been stated and restated, not just by my delegation but by the delegations of the G.21, individually or through their Coordinators, throughout the year. Our priority has been, from the beginning, the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, and we have repeatedly tried to elaborate the idea, present drafts, put forward various possible mandates for negotiation, but we have got nowhere on these. During the course of the year, therefore, and it will be recalled, Mr. President - nobody would recall this better than you, since it was Sri Lanka which had proposed that we try and get something moving, and I was very happy to hear the representative of the United States recognize that - what the G.21 has been trying to do is not to impose their priority on the CD, but to try and find a way ahead for the CD to do some work. Clearly, it cannot be our intention with two or three weeks left for the CD for us to start working on any ad hoc committee immediately, but we do see a possibility to lay foundations for a programme of work next year, and that is what I think you said in your introductory remarks. It was in that spirit that the G.21

had tried to see where we have differing priorities. We have heard the priorities of some countries. The priority of the G.21 is clear, and clearly we are not coinciding at the present moment. So, the G.21, in a positive spirit, tried to find a way in which - not just to take up our time - the two ad hoc committees could be re-established. The two committees suggested by us are extremely important in themselves, and my delegation is very pleased to note that there has been no objection to these ad hoc committees. This does not mean that we establish them immediately, but at least we can perhaps take a decision this year to establish them next year in the programme of work. This would be a decision which would have to be confirmed by the 1998 session of the CD when it meets again in January. So I would like to repeat this point, that we are aware of the priorities of different countries. These priorities have not coincided during 1997. We have not been able to make much progress on either side. In a spirit of trying to keep the important work of the CD ongoing - and as you said, we are not sort of plucking apples off of trees, or whatever - I forgot the exact metaphor you used; we are not producing treaties out of boxes - but these are both items on the agenda. The agenda for 1997 was agreed, and we therefore felt that these would be areas where work could fruitfully start next year. In this context, I would also like to add that my delegation is not averse to revisiting the mandate, for example, of the Committee on Outer Space. The delegate of the United States has suggested that this is necessary, and we are quite prepared to cooperate to see how we can come to an agreed mandate and perhaps, Mr. President, we could leave this to you to check with delegations in the remaining two or three weeks, or even inter-sessionally since you remain President until 31 December, to see how we can come to an agreed mandate so that this item could at least be included in our programme of work in 1998.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for her statement and the kind words she addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. ALBON (South Africa): Allow me to add my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. As the Conference will recall from the last time that my delegation addressed the issue of the establishment of ad hoc committees at an informal session of the Conference, and following further consultations with my capital in this regard, South Africa's position on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances remains unchanged. As was previously stated in greater detail, South Africa is firmly of the view that the appropriate venue for addressing the issue of security assurances is within the strengthened review process of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Accordingly, I wish to inform you that South Africa continues to oppose the establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances in the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, first of all my delegation would like to express our sincere congratulations to you on taking the Chair. We know that you are an extremely experienced diplomat in the field of disarmament. Although we have come to the final stage of our third session this year, we still hope that under your presidency we will still be able to make some headway in the remaining part of our third session. At the same time I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to express to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Slovakia, our thanks for her industrious efforts. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, the Ambassador of Chile and the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. I would be most pleased to cooperate fully with them.

In the following I would like to briefly comment on the two points made by the Coordinator of the G.21. The Chinese delegation has always held the view that the CD should establish an ad hoc committee on NSA as soon as possible and negotiate on the provision of unconditional security guarantees to the non-nuclear-weapon States. My delegation believes that the international situation has undergone colossal changes. The cold war has ended. Confrontation has ended. The situation has relaxed. The relationship between the major Powers has also improved. If in the past there might have been some excuse for not providing security assurances, today these reasons no longer exist. Therefore the Chinese delegation holds the view that, in the first place, the demands put forward by the non-aligned countries are justified and reasonable. Second, I believe that the time is also opportune. In this regard, my delegation has the deep impression that the G.21 has long ago put forward this proposal. Today we are belatedly listening to the response made by the relevant parties. The Chinese delegation appreciates the action of making the response. This is because a late response is better than no response at all. Otherwise, someone will say again that we ran out of time. My delegation still hopes that, under your presidency and of course at your convenience, you can enter into further consultations with the parties concerned. If this is not possible this year, then at the very beginning of the CD session next year we may be able to enter into discussions immediately on this issue. If indeed technically it is not feasible to do so this year, can we reach a common understanding and come to a decision that this issue would be discussed at the outset of the CD session next year?

I would also like to make a comment on landmines. Now many countries are proceeding to Ottawa to take part in the Ottawa Process on landmines. The Chinese delegation respects the choices made by these countries and wishes them good luck. However, as far as the Chinses delegation is concerned, we believe that, whatever perspective one may have, the landmine does not deserve to become a focus of negotiation at the CD. Why? Because the landmine is too small in terms of scale. It is not qualified. In fact, the Chinese delegation holds the view that outer space is much bigger and far more important. It is said that there is no arms race in outer space at present. This is fine - we hope this is indeed the reality. Is there militarization of outer space? We hope there is not any. If there is indeed no arms race in outer space, then what is wrong with the proposal put forward by the G.21 to prevent an arms race in outer space? Therefore, we support the request of the G.21 to establish an ad hoc committee on outer space to negotiate on the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We do not wish to see a repetition of a historical mistake. It will be too late to deal with this problem when the race has entered into an intense phase.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? It does not seem to be the case. I would be stating the obvious if I were to say that I was quite heartened by the responses given by several delegations this morning to the question posed by the representative of the G.21. If I got the sentiment of those delegations right, I believe they do not have an objection in principle to the re-establishment of the two ad hoc committees, namely, on NSA and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, subject to certain conditions. I am certain that the Conference will agree with me that further consultations on this matter will be required to reach a final agreement. I believe that during the remaining days available to the Conference, we will be able to reach such an agreement with the kind of goodwill that seems to have entered this room, and if there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor at this point in time, I would like to move to the next item.

As I informed the group coordinators yesterday at the Presidential consultations, in accordance with rule 44 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, I have prepared, with the assistance of the secretariat, the draft of our annual report to the General Assembly of the United Nations. The draft report will be available in all official languages in delegations' pigeon-holes on Monday, 25 August 1997. My intention is to start consideration of the draft annual report at an informal plenary meeting to be held after the plenary meeting of Thursday, 28 August 1997.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Thursday, 28 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.776
28 August 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 28 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 776th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As agreed at our last plenary meeting, we shall hold an informal plenary meeting immediately following the adjournment of this plenary, in order to start the consideration of the draft annual report of the Conference to the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I have on my list of speakers for today the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Zahran of Egypt, the Special Coordinator on expansion of membership, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, the Special Coordinator on review of the agenda, Ambassador Náray of Hungary, the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, as well as the representatives of Germany and Iraq. I now give the floor to Ambassador Zahran of Egypt.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me at the outset to express to you my congratulations and those of the Egyptian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I wish to assure you of our eagerness to cooperate fully with you in the exercise of your duties. Your presidency of the Conference comes at the end of your assignment as Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in Geneva, thereby crowning your work and your valuable contributions not only to the Conference but to various other Geneva-based international institutions during this period, which has witnessed so many events. It is auspicious that you are assuming the presidency after the expansion of the membership of the Conference, in which you played an important role. I would like to express to you my most sincere congratulations and my best wishes to you and your family after your departure from Geneva.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo of Senegal and Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for their valuable endeavours during their tenure of the presidency. I would like also to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues who have recently joined the CD to head their countries' delegations, namely, Ambassador Javier Illanes of Chile, Ambassador Clive Wallace Pearson of New Zealand and Ambassador Ian Soutar of the United Kingdom, and I look forward to cooperating with all of them in the future.

(continued in English)

Pursuant to the decision adopted by the Conference on Disarmament at its 770th plenary meeting, on 26 June 1997, by which it appointed me as a Special Coordinator for the improved and effective functioning of the CD, I have held four informal open-ended consultations in order to seek the views of the member States on the subject. The consultations were as transparent as possible and open to non-member States participating in the work of the Conference. In addition, I have undertaken informal consultations with the respective groups and China on the outline of the draft report which I have prepared.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

In fulfilling my mandate the consultations focused on issues of importance and concern to various delegations bearing in mind the ideas and views expressed by them. However, in submitting this report to the Conference on Disarmament, it is worth while noting that the delegation of Chile made a suggestion to update the CD's rules of procedure and, to that effect, it submitted a draft paper entitled "Proposed draft - Rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament", which the CD secretariat circulated as document CD/1473 in order to enable delegations to study it. Due to the limited time allowed to me to consult on the improved and effective functioning of the CD, I was not in a position to consult or to have a substantive exchange of views with member States on the Chilean proposal.

In order to proceed in a structured manner, I prepared a set of questions which were made available to all delegations. The informal open-ended consultations, which I organized with the valuable assistance of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, were constructive and generated a rich debate. Against this background, my own perception from the consultations leads me to believe that further consultations may be required. It is to be noted that the present report has not been negotiated with member States; thus it cannot be considered as a report of the CD. I can regroup the issues in question in two categories.

As far as the first category is concerned, a better understanding seems to be detected on the following. First, it was generally felt that, while the expansion of the CD is the responsibility of another Special Coordinator, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, the aim of the expansion of the CD is to ensure a more representative membership. Any further expansion may provide an opportunity to make a change or an adaptation to the method of work of the CD.

Second, the rule of consensus in decision-making should be maintained. In the framework of consensus-building, it was felt that flexibility and mutual accommodation should be demonstrated in order to attain that objective.

Third, the need to make full use of the mechanisms provided for in the rules of procedure regarding various forms of informal consultations was recognized. In this regard, resorting to informal open-ended consultations was particularly encouraged.

Fourth, while the group system was not envisaged in the rules of procedure, the current informal regional and political groups are maintained in order to facilitate consultations among the CD members. In addition, discussions favoured consultations among the so-called like-minded countries, depending on the issue under consideration, in order to facilitate reaching consensus.

Fifth, no change in the present rules regarding the adoption of the CD agenda and programme of work at the beginning of each session.

Sixth, it was felt that the President of the CD could, acting on a request by a member of the Conference and with the concurrence of the Conference, propose to move the closure of a debate on procedural matters. It was also recognized that it is within the prerogative of the President to establish a time limit for statements or interventions of delegations after consultation with the CD members and their consent.

Seventh, no change should be made in the current four-working-week tenure for each member country to preside over the Conference as provided for in the rules of procedure.

Eighth, the secretariat of the Conference should continue to provide the necessary professional assistance and support to the President of the Conference in the performance of his or her duties, including providing background material and information, and ensuring continuity of the functions of the presidency, since it rotates every four working weeks.

Ninth, the rules of procedure regarding the role of the secretariat and the work of the Conference on Disarmament should remain without change. In this regard, reference was made particularly to rules 15 and 17; the latter underlines the necessary support which the United Nations Secretary-General is invited to provide to the CD secretariat.

Tenth, concerning the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding the reform of the United Nations, particularly the disarmament section, the CD could have been consulted before issuing this section of the report for the sake of accuracy and comprehensiveness.

Eleventh, the interaction between the CD and the General Assembly should be maintained as far as the CD annual reports and the United Nations General Assembly resolutions are concerned.

Twelfth, the contribution of NGOs to the work of the CD was recognized. While their participation in the CD negotiations was ruled out, their continued interaction with delegations was encouraged.

As for the second category of issues, further consultations are needed on the following. First, application of the rule of consensus to matters of substance only, or both substance and procedure. In this regard, delegations found difficulty in reaching a common understanding on the definition of consensus, as well as the distinction between matters of substance and procedure.

Second, adoption of the agenda and programme of work of the Conference on a biennial or pluri-annual basis.

Third, inclusion in the annual reports of the CD of a brief description of the main themes, initiatives and proposals made through statements at the plenary meetings of the Conference without value judgement. In this regard, it was emphasized that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the annual reports should be factual and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference. Some delegations thought that such a brief description of proposals and initiatives in the body of the report is needed for a better reading and better consideration by the United Nations General Assembly session.

Fourth, greater involvement of NGOs in the work of the Conference, such as allowing them to deliver statements at plenary meetings, if requested. A delegation proposed that the Presidential "troika" might be authorized to organize an exchange of views with NGOs and report to the CD.

Against this background, my personal assessment is that the informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the CD were useful, constructive and reflected the shared desire to continue in the future the consultations to improve the effectiveness of the functioning of the CD. Hence, I recommend that the Conference on Disarmament continue consultations to re-examine the efficiency of its work in its next session in 1998 in the same format, and to benefit from the rich debate which took place during this part of the current CD session.

Mr. KREID (Austria): Let me at the outset congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your mandate and wish you well in your ongoing efforts of providing guidance and inspiration to the work of the Conference. I should also like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská of Slovakia, under whose skilful leadership I was appointed Special Coordinator on expansion. I have the honour and pleasure to acquaint you with my findings.

On the basis of the mandate bestowed upon me by member States to examine the question of expansion, I have proceeded with consultations both bilaterally and multilaterally. Regrettably, the limited time available to me during the current session of the CD has not allowed bilateral contacts with all member delegations. Yet, in the course of meetings with the groups and of open-ended informal consultations conducted on Tuesday 19 August, I had the opportunity to collect the views of a large number of delegations, members as well as non-member participants.

Because of the brevity of time and the divergence of views expressed, I do not feel that the moment has come for me to formulate a concrete proposal for the admission of new members on which the Conference could take a decision. Rather, it appears necessary that further efforts be made with a view to narrowing down existing differences of opinion and thus laying the basis for a consensus decision.

My findings so far can be resumed in the following way. While there is no delegation opposed to expansion in principle, there are divergent views as to its appropriate timing and scope and possible selection criteria for new members. It has been stated that, at a time of prolonged dispute within the Conference on its programme of work and in the absence of substantial negotiations, the admission of new members would hardly be the proper signal. Having admitted 23 countries only last year, which equals roughly a third of its current composition, the Conference now needs to demonstrate that this sizeable increase in membership has not affected its capacity as a negotiating forum. This amounts to saying that a decision on expansion cannot be taken until there is sufficient experience to evaluate the performance of a 61-member CD. If this attitude prevails it would, of course, significantly delay action on further CD expansion.

A concept which is favoured by a number of delegations is that of fixing an upper limit of membership. It was said that there is a need to define an optimum number for the conduct of negotiations. While some delegations feel that this optimum number has already been exceeded in the course of the last expansion, the others believe that there is still room for new members. However, no delegation has specified where actually the limit should be set or how such an optimum number could be arrived at.

In this context a recurrent complaint against the lack of participation of certain member countries was formulated. It is widely felt that efforts should be made in order to find out if all member countries wish to retain their seat in the Conference. It should be noted, however, that Ambassador O'Sullivan had already taken such an initiative with negative results. As to the future membership, a number of delegations stated that the will and capacity to contribute to the work of the Conference should constitute a selection criterion.

On the other hand, a considerable number of delegations felt that the CD needed to be an open-ended body and should admit each country interested in membership in order to better reflect the trends and positions prevailing in the global context and to enhance its representativeness. These delegations pleading for an open-ended CD argued that the number of participants was not decisive for the success of a negotiation, and that the current international environment no longer justified the traditional concepts of regional or any other kind of balance. Thinking in terms of balance, it was argued, was particularly unproductive in an organization which took decisions by consensus. In this context reference was made repeatedly to General Assembly resolution 51/47 A, which calls upon the Conference on Disarmament "to consider all remaining applications for membership with a view to reaching a decision on its further enlargement before the end of its 1997 session".

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned arguments, the issue of balance was frequently raised. I have therefore come to believe that the question of balance will need to receive proper attention in formulating any final recommendations to the Conference.

Apart from the demand for regional or political balance, it was argued that the Conference should admit new members in chronological order based on the date of their application for membership. One delegation suggested an approach whereby the President of the Conference submits the question of admission of each applicant country to the Conference in chronological order. Other delegations were in favour of a phased approach in a time-bound framework whereby the Conference would decide on the future date of admission of all applicant countries spread out over a number of years.

While such concepts deserve further study, it should be pointed out that neither approach would respond to the criterion of regional balance, and that the last-mentioned option of a phased admission might be found incompatible with the rule of a regular review of membership which points to a step-by-step procedure. It also leaves unanswered what should happen to future applicants who do not figure in the agreed schedule of admission.

The opinion was voiced by certain delegations that future members should be chosen on the basis of their "peace-lovingness". It might be recalled that Ambassador O'Sullivan, when drawing up his list of 23 countries for admission, was, inter alia, guided by the concept of bringing countries in regions of conflict into the CD precisely in order to implicate them more fully in disarmament affairs.

Taking into consideration these results of my consultations, which I have tried to summarize as objectively as possible, it seems obvious that at this stage a decision on the question of expansion appears premature. Further work is necessary to clarify a number of concepts such as that of an optimum number of members, of the connection between effective negotiations and the number of participants, or of specific selection criteria for new members.

Most, if not all, of these considerations were already discussed at earlier stages of CD expansion. The fact that they were not developed further at that time does not invalidate them for the future, although it points to the inherent difficulty of translating such concepts into practical action.

There is a keen awareness among member States that the profound transformation of the global political scene cannot be ignored by the Conference and that it needs to be reflected both with regard to membership and working methods. Yet delegations are under no illusion as to the difficulty and maybe inescapable contradictions in trying to grapple with the opposing concepts of representativeness and effectiveness, of national security interests reflected in the application for membership and the perceived need for regional and political balance as one of the key ingredients of past expansions.

If the question of membership is regarded as one subordinated to the question of functioning of the Conference, the answer to the scope and character of the next expansion will have to be given in the light of the findings of the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. The other option, to be sure, would be that the Conference first decides on its membership and then embarks on an examination of whether it needs to adjust its working methods accordingly.

The argument that a modest increase in membership will not have a significant impact on the work of the CD deserves proper attention as well. In such a case it might be possible to reach agreement on an expansion of membership up to a number considered tolerable for the process of decision-making in the CD. To find out what this "tolerable increase" might be could well be one of the tasks of the next Special Coordinator on expansion, should the Conference decide on such an appointment.

In conclusion, I should like to express my appreciation to all delegations which have participated in my consultations and helped me to obtain as clear a picture as possible of the prevailing trains of thought on the issue of expansion. I should also like to render tribute to the secretariat, which has indeed provided valuable assistance to me in the execution of my task.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I am confident that you will provide us with strong leadership through the difficult closing weeks of the annual session. Please rest assured of my delegation's support. May I also express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnahorská of Slovakia, for the excellent manner in which she performed her duties at the helm of this body?

I have asked for the floor in my capacity as Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda. Following my appointment at the 770th plenary meeting on 26 June this year, I conducted bilateral consultations with almost 30 delegations representing all constituencies. I should like to emphasize that they have been far from exhaustive due to the lack of time. I apologize to those delegations, among them observer delegations, whom I could not reach this way. I had the honour to undertake collective consultations with the members of the G-21, as well as with delegations belonging to the Western Group. An exchange of views on the agenda also took place in the Eastern European Group. I also consulted with the delegation of China. I convened an open-ended consultation on 19 August this year, when members and observers had the opportunity to reflect on my preliminary report. I am grateful to Ambassadors and delegates who have made themselves available for these talks and the openness they have demonstrated. National positions have also found their reflection in the statements to the plenary meetings, which I have duly taken into account.

I wish to state that I did not have to start my work from scratch. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the comprehensive and thoughtful report of Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria, my predecessor last year, which was submitted on 3 September 1996. The validity of most of his findings and conclusions have been confirmed by my consultations.

I wish to add, however, that the mandate of the Special Coordinator for 1996 was a more specific one as opposed to the rather general and less precise mandate I have received. My consultations inevitably touched upon the problem of the programme of work as well. This was partly due to the interrelated character of rules 27 and 28 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, but most importantly the different interpretation of the terms "agenda" and "programme of work" by delegations, as I will indicate in my report later. I believe, therefore, that a future discussion on the review of the agenda should be conducted in conjunction with the work programme, as was the case last year. I have no doubt that a successful review of the CD's agenda would make an important contribution to the much needed revitalization of our work.

Against this background, allow me to share with you some of the impressions I have gained from these consultations. Before doing that, let me stress that any observations or conclusions my report contains are my own and are not binding for delegations.

The observations of my report are grouped around two main schools of thought related to the agenda, though they do not cover completely all shades of opinion. This structure is not an artificial invention - rather, a natural outcome of what I have heard from you.

Delegations associating themselves with the first school of thought, my consultations revealed, advocate a strong relationship between the Final Document of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament, held in 1978, the Decalogue, and the actual agenda of the CD. These delegations pointed out that they did not see the roots of the problems in the content of the present agenda, or in the accepted priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament, which they still consider relevant, but rather in their implementation. As they stressed, the CD has failed to address the agenda items which are related to nuclear disarmament. These delegations pointed out that nuclear disarmament should remain the absolute priority on any future agenda of the CD. Delegations representing this position expressed to me their wish to maintain the present agenda in its entirety. In their view any major changes in the present agenda can be introduced only by a new special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament. Under this concept the proper place for the selection of topics for actual negotiations is the programme of work.

The other current of opinion on this question enjoys equally wide support. In the view of these delegations, the agenda should be brought in line with the profound changes which have occurred in the world in the last couple of years. They believe that the present agenda is anachronistic and should be replaced by a new, updated, streamlined, forward-looking and realistic one. Delegations sharing this approach are of the opinion that the CD, as an autonomous independent body, is free to set new priorities and draw up a new agenda. The second basic element for this school of thinking, as formulated during the talks, is the need for a more practical agenda, focusing on items with a real potential for substantive or preparatory negotiations. The programme of work for these delegations should consist of a calendar of meetings and eventual institutional arrangements. The third and last element envisaged by the proponents of this approach is the notion of balance between nuclear and conventional items. Accordingly, they prefer the establishment of three broad items entitled "Nuclear disarmament", "Conventional disarmament" and "Other items", this last one mainly to deal with issues related to outer space. In this context, many delegations expressed support for document CD/1434. Delegations belonging to this school of thought indicated that their priority was to start negotiations in the CD on FMCT and APLs.

Some delegations with a clear preference for the first approach indicated a certain degree of flexibility, saying that they were ready to accept a kind of restructuring of the agenda if it were instrumental in overcoming the present stalemate on condition that the existing pattern of priorities favouring nuclear disarmament is maintained.

One delegation suggested the introduction of a two-tier agenda. This would amount to an entirely new structure where the agenda is split up into items reflecting the long-term disarmament priorities of the international community and items for concrete negotiations in a given year.

This concludes the review of the general considerations and proposals delegations put forward during the bilateral or multilateral consultations.

Let me turn now to comments made concerning the concrete items of the agenda adopted on 14 February 1997 and contained in document CD/1446. The agenda items have remained unchanged for several years. The only change as compared with the agenda in 1996 is the deletion of item 1, "Nuclear test ban". I would not venture to provide you with exact statistics on the number of delegations favouring or opposing keeping, deleting, adding or reformulating a given item on the agenda. I trust, however, that the exchanges of views indicated some general trends in the attitude of delegations.

The comments and observations received on the concrete items on the agenda as adopted for this year are as follows:

Item 1. Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament

This was the most discussed item during my consultations. A great number of delegations conveyed to me the view that it constitutes an absolute priority for them and it is the central issue the CD must address. This stance was reflected in many statements in the plenary and in formal proposals tabled this year, for example in documents CD/1462 and CD/1463, just to mention the most recent ones.

There is a clear trend to keep this item. Many delegations, however, referring to the fundamental political changes that have taken place in the last several years, clarified their positions by proposing amendments to the actual wording. The idea was advanced to delete the first part of item 1, which would then read "Nuclear disarmament". Some proposed to reformulate this item as "Non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament". These suggestions were made with a view to better reflecting existing realities and the progress made in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

One delegation proposed to split up this item into two. At least two delegations favour its merger with item 2.

Item 2. Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters

My previous consultations revealed a clear trend in favour of either the deletion of this item or its merger with item 1. On the other hand, several delegations indicated to me that they attach importance to this issue being reflected in the agenda.

Item 3. Prevention of an arms race in outer space

There is a clear trend in favour of keeping this item. At the same time delegations' positions differed in regard to the urgency of the problem. At least two delegations put forward the idea of reformulating this item so it would read as follows: "Legally binding document to prevent the weaponization of outer space". Some consider that the most appropriate way to address this issue would be in the context of confidence-building measures.

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

Item 4. Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons

There is clear general support for keeping this item, be it as a lone-standing item or under the broader group of items entitled "Nuclear disarmament". One delegation conveyed to me its doubts whether this issue was more efficiently dealt with in the CD or in the context of the NPT. One delegation proposed the notion of "positive security assurances" to be included in the agenda.

Item 5. New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons

Delegations are divided over this issue. Several delegations favour its maintenance; some others called it too vague and therefore proposed its deletion.

Item 6. Comprehensive programme of disarmament

A great number of delegations from all groups suggested the deletion of this item or at least indicated the lack of opposition on their side to do so if there is a consensus. Others called for its retention and its expansion to cover nuclear as well as conventional weapons. Proposals were made to replace it by a new item entitled either "Conventional disarmament" or "Anti-personnel landmines".

Item 7. Transparency in armaments

For many delegations this item is high on the list of priorities and most delegations do not oppose keeping this item. They stressed the need for a comprehensive scope, including weapons of mass destruction. I have, however, also registered views calling for its deletion on the grounds that it was outdated.

I would like to conclude this section of my report by listing specific proposals which have been supported to be added to the existing agenda. Some of them, like "FMCT", "conventional disarmament" and "anti-personnel landmines", have been recurrent issues in the CD's deliberations this year. My consultations did not reveal new developments in the well-known trends. Another group of proposed additions, mentioned by at least one delegation, comprises the following items: regional aspects of disarmament, and miliary restructuring and conversion. This last was proposed by one delegation with specific reference to the requirements of the post-cold-war era.

This very general outline of the impressions I gained from talks with you indicates that consensus on the future agenda is not within reach. Also due to the complexity of the questions involved and the limited time span of my tenure, I am not in a position to make any recommendations on the substance of the review of the agenda to the Conference. On the other hand, I had the impression that delegations are interested and willing to take up this issue in 1998. May I therefore recommend to the Conference to continue the consultations on the review of the agenda during the next annual session?

In conclusion I would like to thank all delegations for their support and cooperation and their active contribution. I also thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the CD, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and his staff for their professionalism and assistance.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation as you carry out your demanding responsibilities. I also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for the effective and productive way in which she guided our deliberations. I also welcome the newcomers to our Conference.

I have asked for the floor to present a further report to the CD on the consultations I have undertaken as the Conference's Special Coordinator on landmines.

I have now held bilateral consultations with over 55 members of the Conference seeking their views on a possible mandate for the CD to undertake work on landmines and their views on when that work might commence.

My consultations thus far have confirmed that a clear majority of delegation members of the Conference are in favour, or are at least not opposed to, appropriate work commencing in the CD on landmines. While serious caution was expressed by some delegations, the mandate with the most supporters in the Conference is one which would have the CD adopt a phased or step-by-step approach to the elimination of landmines beginning with work on exports, imports and transfers. Most delegations would prefer to decide on a specific mandate in early 1998.

That said, there are at least two delegations who have indicated that they need further instructions before committing themselves to any particular course of action. There are two delegations that remain opposed to work in the CD, and there are delegations who would prefer a different mandate to the one I have just described.

As Special Coordinator I have interpreted my role as to take soundings of delegations' positions, to identify both the common ground and those issues on which opinions differ, and then to attempt to come up with a proposal which is likely to have the most chance of being adopted by the Conference.

I am at the stage of completing my soundings of delegations and identifying where they come together and where they divide. One overriding point in common is that a role for the CD cannot be precisely determined until early 1998.

With my mandate about to expire I find myself in the same position as my fellow Coordinators, that is, needing more time to complete the task this

Conference entrusted to me. I therefore seek the approval of the Conference to the extension of my mandate to enable me to present a report in the first part of our 1998 session.

The purpose of that extension would be to complete my initial round of bilateral meetings, undertake consultations, including open-ended consultations as appropriate, and meet with regional groups during the inter-sessional period with a view to presenting a full and final report to the CD during the first part of our session in 1998.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of this Conference. We appreciate that you are discharging your duties at a difficult juncture and in anticipation of the normal alphabetical order, thus demonstrating a strong commitment to the purposes of the Conference on Disarmament. May I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation? Allow me also to express my gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská, for her untiring effort to lead our work. At the same time I would like to welcome our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of Chile, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The fundamental changes which have occurred in international security following the end of the cold war have made possible outstanding success in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

In September 1992 the Conference on Disarmament reported the Chemical Weapons Convention to the United Nations General Assembly. On 29 April 1997 this Convention, which provides for an effectively verifiable ban of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, entered into force.

Last year this Conference successfully concluded negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty - a long sought-after goal in the history of arms control.

Both achievements have demonstrated the CD's capacity to succeed in complex negotiations. While the post-cold-war era offers unique opportunities for strengthening international security and stability in an environment of globalization, cooperation and growing interdependence of States, we still face a number of risks. It is a world fraught with regional conflicts, convulsive nationalism, ethnic strife and terrorism. Huge conventional arsenals and considerable stocks of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery entail a persistent risk of proliferation. Thus, the disarmament process has not yet come to an end - it is facing new daunting challenges.

In nuclear disarmament important progress has been achieved, but much remains to be done. Germany welcomes the agreement reached by President Clinton and President Yeltsin during their March 1997 Helsinki summit. We also welcome the agreement reached between the United States of America and Russia concerning the demarcation between tactical and strategic missile defence. We hope that this agreement will facilitate early ratification of START II by the Russian Duma so that START III negotiations

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

can begin without delay, aiming at reductions in deployed strategic warheads to 2,000 to 2,500 by 31 December 2007. This would bring strategic nuclear arsenals down to 20 per cent of the highest cold war levels and would be a major step towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Attempting to interfere with the bilateral nuclear disarmament process, which is well under way, would not yield any benefits for the CD; nor would it be productive to set specific time limits for the process of nuclear disarmament.

We do believe, however, that nuclear disarmament is an important issue which the CD must be able to address with a view to encouraging progress and to identifying issues that could be the subject of multilateral negotiations.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the constraints it imposes on the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons is an example of the substantial contribution the CD can make to the wider process of nuclear disarmament. The next logical step overdue is the negotiation and successful conclusion by the CD of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Both resolution 48/75 L, adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly, and the decision by the 1995 NPT Review Conference on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" called for early cut-off negotiations. Germany remains committed to the prompt commencement of negotiations on an FMCT which should end for ever the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and make a significant contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament as well as to the strengthening of nuclear non-proliferation. Such a treaty should be effectively verifiable, non-discriminatory and universally applicable. Full-scope safeguards under international supervision should apply to nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike.

After intensive consultations by Ambassador Shannon, the CD reached consensus in 1995 on a mandate for cut-off negotiations. It is flexible enough to permit addressing the security concerns expressed by the members of this Conference and thus provides a solid basis for negotiations.

This brings me to another urgent issue which is high on the international agenda both as a humanitarian concern and as a disarmament measure - a ban on anti-personnel landmines (APLs). Germany is deeply concerned by the human suffering caused by the proliferation of APLs. We vigorously support international efforts to combat and resolve the landmine problem. In 1996 Germany completely renounced APLs and imposed an unlimited export moratorium on such weapons. By the end of 1997 all German APL stocks will have been destroyed.

In summer 1996 Federal Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel launched a seven-point action programme on APLs which was welcomed by more than 100 States. Germany is also committed to the EU Joint Action on APLs of October 1996, which aims at a total ban on APLs at the earliest possible date, a comprehensive export moratorium on all types of APLs and increased financial support for international mine-clearing activities.

Now the time has come for negotiations to implement United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S adopted by an overwhelming majority of 156 States. Germany is fully committed to the Ottawa Process including its landmarks, the Brussels Declaration and the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which will hopefully lead to the signing of a convention totally banning the production, stockpiling, use and trading of APLs before the end of this year.

At the same time, Germany is convinced that the CD, with its long-standing experience and know-how as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, can and should make a major contribution to solving the APLs problem.

From the very outset we have held the view that the Ottawa Process and work within the CD should be complementary, that is, mutually consistent and reinforcing. Both tracks should be directed towards the paramount goal of a comprehensive and effective ban on APLs. In this context we see a significant role for the CD in making a substantial contribution towards ensuring the universality of an APL ban.

While we are aware that the CD may not be in a position to reach this objective in a single negotiating effort, it has the capacity to achieve results with universal effect.

We welcome and support Ambassador Campbell's discharging of his duties as Special Coordinator on APLs. We hope that after the signature of a convention on APLs in Ottawa, which is scheduled to take place before the end of this year, the stage can be set for the CD to establish an ad hoc group and to adopt a negotiating mandate on APLs at the very outset of next year's session.

The CD cannot produce a spectacular success such as last year's CTBT every year. Sometimes a period of reflection may be needed. But as this year's session is drawing to an end, we cannot be but disappointed by its results. Too much time is being expended with too little result. Despite its numerous formal and informal meetings, the Conference is not being perceived by our publics as the productive multilateral forum it should be. As a consequence, the CD is facing an increasing credibility problem. Against this background, we welcome the appointment of four Special Coordinators and fully support their work. We attach particular importance to improving the functioning of this Conference, including the updating of its agenda.

We do see a continuing need to examine how we can make our working methods more effective. In particular, given the monthly rotating Chair, we think there is an objective need to strengthen the role and function of the CD presidency. Certain concrete steps to this end would make it easier for the CD President to carry out his tasks and would, at the same time, lie in the interest of all of us. More effective working methods are necessary now, and even more so when the CD envisages further expansion of its membership.

We also believe that an update of our traditional CD agenda has to reflect the international changes and resulting challenges. We therefore think that the time is ripe for negotiations on an FMCT and a ban on APLs.

Consultations so far have, however shown that we will probably not be able to reach consensus by the end of this session on any of the subjects under review. Special Coordinators should therefore be permitted to pursue their work during the inter-sessional period with a view to presenting their reports at the beginning of next year's session.

Mr. President, my delegation places full trust in your leadership and determination to move this Conference forward. Its credibility will largely depend on whether it can rise to the challenge of engaging in substantive negotiations on a ban on the production of fissile material and on anti-personnel landmines. The Conference has proven in the past that it can meet such challenges and resolve problems if there is political will. We have full confidence that you and the succeeding Swedish presidency will spare no effort to prepare the ground - also during the inter-sessional period - so that substantive negotiations can begin at the outset of next year's session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq, Ambassador Al-Tikriti.

Mr. AL-TIKRITI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at such a crucial stage of its history. We are confident that your competence, wisdom and experience will help to overcome the difficulties impeding our work. I would like to commend your predecessor, Her Excellency the distinguished Ambassador of Slovakia, who discharged her responsibilities in a convincing and objective manner, and I would also like to welcome our colleagues, the new Ambassadors, who have assumed their duties at the Conference. I wish to assure them that my country's delegation will cooperate with them in a highly diligent and responsible manner.

Mr. President, my country's delegation listened with great attention to your opening statement at the plenary meeting on 21 August 1997, in which you described in an honest and realistic manner the uncomfortable situation that has prevailed during this year's session. However, your optimistic expectations for the coming session have created the hope of surmounting the difficulties which are impeding the accomplishment of further achievements in this forum in order to make changes and contemplate open-mindedly what has to be done in this Conference, which enjoys the trust and confidence of the international community in matters of disarmament.

Needless to say, important and sensitive issues require time for thorough deliberation, an exchange of views and consultation in order to take appropriate, practical and realistic decisions on the important issues facing the Conference. Nevertheless, this should not be used by some parties as a means to sidetrack issues of great importance to the majority and weaken efforts exerted to reach solutions to the outstanding questions which the Conference has failed to resolve at its 1997 session. In this respect, a well-known saying could apply: "If you leave food too long on the fire, you will certainly burn it". Therefore we urge the Conference to be aware of the time element, which might not be in our favour.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a widespread feeling that some parties in the Conference are trying to block any progress in its work and keep it bogged down in prolonged debates, which sometimes seem to be sterile and pointless. While we appreciate the preoccupations and concerns of others, in our present-day world there are several priorities that cannot be disregarded or overlooked, because they represent a common goal for the whole of mankind, namely the total and final elimination of the nuclear threat. The experience of this year's session constitutes a discouraging and disappointing precedent. The session will end in two weeks' time, and the Conference has failed to resolve even the procedural matters and has not yet begun to discuss any of the substantive issues. There is no indication of flexibility on the questions of high priority which we have already mentioned.

Too much time has been spent on unproductive debates concerning issues on the Conference's agenda, and the positions of member States have become obvious both individually and within geographical and political groups. I would like to ask you: hasn't the time come to take the appropriate decision to begin our work seriously in order to make up for what we have already lost and accomplish at least part of what is expected of us?

My country's delegation, by raising this question at this very time two weeks before the end of this year's session, is inviting the Conference to make use of the inter-sessional period to endeavour to prepare the way for the commencement of substantive work at the beginning of 1998.

The central question facing the Conference is not whether there are further tasks to be fulfilled to ensure more stable and sustainable security for mankind; it is rather the identification of the issues to be negotiated with a view to achieving or approaching this goal, and the manner in which the negotiating process should be organized in order to enable us to achieve appropriate and realistic objectives that take into consideration the interests and concerns of all in an unbiased and democratic way. This Conference will remain the principal forum for negotiations aiming at concluding international agreements on disarmament issues, first and foremost among which is nuclear disarmament, which should remain at the top of the Conference's agenda. Hence, the nuclear-weapon States should shoulder their responsibilities in this respect since they have a special obligation under the provisions of the NPT and the document on principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT.

We noted a glimmer of hope in the statements made by some delegations at the last plenary meeting, and we could develop and build on this hope. Although some delegations wish to rephrase or delete parts of the agenda items for serious consultation without prejudice to the purely substantive issues, nuclear disarmament remains a priority for my country's delegation as well as for the Group of 21, of which Iraq is a member. This item represents a priority for us because of its importance to the international community as a whole. We believe that the priority for this Conference is total nuclear disarmament, as was made clear by my country's delegation in its statement in the plenary meeting on 14 August 1997. This is a wide-ranging and delicate issue which should be dealt with in a realistic manner. We therefore support the view that parallel steps should be taken to achieve the ultimate goal, namely the elimination of nuclear weapons, by, for example, re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Realizing the sensitivity of nuclear disarmament and pending the achievement of this goal, we would like to reiterate the need to provide the non-nuclear-weapon States with assurances that nuclear weapons will not be used against them and that they will not be threatened with the use of such weapons. We therefore urge the Conference to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on assurances at its coming session, as well as the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, and my country's delegation is flexible with regard to the rephrasing of the title of this item.

My country's delegation listened a short while ago to the reports of the four Special Coordinators, and we would like to express to them our gratitude and appreciation for their constructive work and the considerable efforts and extensive consultations they have undertaken in a very transparent manner. My country's delegation has expressed its position with regard to the various issues under discussion. The rules of procedure state that the mandate of the Coordinators should be terminated after the presentation of their final reports. We therefore propose that it might be preferable to renew the mandates of the four distinguished Coordinators at the beginning of the next session in 1998 in order to enable them to continue their constructive work and not to waste more time next year. I believe that some of the Coordinators have put forward this idea in one way or another.

Finally, before concluding its statement, my country's delegation wishes to reaffirm its readiness to cooperate and coordinate both within the Group of 21 and with the Conference as a whole.

The PRESIDENT I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile): With your permission, Sir, I will read a statement which has been submitted to the CD on behalf of Poland and Chile concerning the subject of anti-personnel landmines and the Conference on Disarmament. It says:

> "We express our recognition and support to the objectives of humanitarian nature pursued by the 'Ottawa Process' which encompasses the concern of the international community for eliminating anti-personnel landmines, thus reducing the great number of innocent people who fall every year a victim of this type of weapons.
>
> "We think that the convention which, as an outcome of this process, will be adopted by the Oslo Conference, would contribute to the achievement of this noble objective.
>
> "At the same time we are convinced that the subject of anti-personnel landmines includes important aspects which can best be addressed by the specialized negotiating forum of the Conference on Disarmament.

"We believe that the Conference on Disarmament, through the consideration and negotiation of agreements complementary to, consistent with and mutually supportive of the one to be concluded in Ottawa, can make a significant contribution to reaching the goals of the United Nations on this matter.

"We agree that achieving universal support for such a goal should be a paramount objective, the attainment of which is possible through a negotiating process in which due consideration can be given to national security concerns of involved parties.

"It was with this in mind that we made a proposal to the Conference, on 27 March 1997, that led to the appointment of a Special Coordinator to hold consultations on a possible mandate for negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on the question of anti-personnel landmines. We commend him for his diligent work so far. Given the short period which he has had available for his consultations, and the need to take account of work proceeding on this issue outside the Conference on Disarmament, it is clear that he will not be in a position to present his final recommendations to the Conference before the end of this year's session. We would, therefore, strongly support the continuation of his consultations during the inter-sessional period and the presentation of a final report at the start of the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament."

This ends the statement, and allow me to add one word to say that this specific reference I have made to the report of the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Campbell, does not in any manner imply that we do not attach the same importance to the very valuable reports of the other Coordinators, the distinguished Ambassadors of Egypt, Austria and Hungary. Indeed, they all deserve the sincere appreciation and careful consideration of the CD. They are the fruit of intensive and intelligent labour, and they cast valuable light on complex issues which, as they have all explained today, would need further consultation and study.

Mr. DUARTE (Brazil): Mr. President, first of all, I wish to congratulate you on behalf of the Brazilian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. You can count on our full cooperation in the discharge of your duties. Let me also thank your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská, for her able conduct of CD business during her tenure. I wish also to thank the Special Coordinators for they comprehensive reports.

Allow me to refer specifically to the report of the Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning, Ambassador Zahran of Egypt. We see great value in his report, which covers extensively and in detail the various nd delicate subjects considered during several rounds of informal onsultations we held this session. We recognize the limitations of the ssessments contained therein, both in terms of them binding only him as pecial Coordinator and of the recommendation that the CD continue onsultations on improved and effective functioning next session. However, I eed to make a clarification with regard to one point. Given the views expressed by my delegation on the specific question of non-governmental organizations' participation in CD work and the statement contained in paragraph 12 of the first heading of his report, in which it is stated that NGO participation in CD negotiations was ruled out, I should make it clear that this position does not correspond to the point of view of my delegation. The inclusion of this phrase in the report, unqualified as it is and under a heading whereby a better understanding seems to be detected on certain issues, should not be misconstrued as representing our opinion on this specific question. Conversely, we do look forward to further consultations on greater involvement of NGOs in the work of the Conference, as referred to in paragraph 4 of the second heading of his report.

Ms. VUORENPÄÄ (Finland): First I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the assumption of your demanding task and assure you of the full cooperation and support of the delegation of Finland.

Finland would like to thank the four Special Coordinators for their comprehensive reports. We consider it important that they can continue their work. In this context I would like to make a special reference to the report of Ambassador Campbell. As in the statement of the Ambassador of Chile, Finland would like to commend Ambassador Campbell for his diligent work so far. It is important that he continue his intensive consultations in the inter-sessional period. It is equally important that the members of the CD support him in his work. We also propose that the CD, in its report to the General Assembly, clearly indicate its wish to continue dealing expeditiously with the issue of APLs right from the beginning of its next session in January 1998.

Mr. ULUÇEVIK (Turkey): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your able presidency, I would like to congratulate you upon your assumption of this high office. I assure you of my delegation's full and constructive support and cooperation. I wish also to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for her outstanding performance as President. Moreover, it gives me pleasure to welcome in our midst Ambassador Javier Illanes of Chile, Ambassador Clive Pearson of New Zealand and Ambassador Ian Soutar of the United Kingdom.

As we have stated on behalf of the Turkish Government, for the record, on a number of previous occasions, my Government sees the CD as the most appropriate body to deal with the subject of APLs. Therefore, my delegation associates itself with the statement which has just been made by the distinguished Ambassador of Chile, particularly with its first subparagraph of paragraph 3, which reads as follows:

> "At the same time, we are convinced that the subject of anti-personnel landmines includes important aspects which can be best addressed by the specialized negotiating forum of the Conference on Disarmament."

We also share the view expressed in the said statement to the effect that in a negotiating process on APLs, due consideration should be given to the national security concerns of involved parties.

I should also like to take this opportunity to commend and thank Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, Special Coordinator on the expansion of membership, Ambassador Náray of Hungary, Special Coordinator on the agenda, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, for their respective comprehensive reports.

As to the report of Ambassador Campbell of Australia on the APLs, my delegation will favourably consider his recommendations. We are of the opinion that in order to enable the Conference to make a smooth start to its work next year, inter-sessional work needs to be done by the Special Coordinator on APLs. With this in mind, and also judging from the statements and recommendations of all four distinguished Special Coordinators, we believe that there is a need for them to continue their respective work and consultations in 1998. Therefore, my delegation favourably considers the idea of extending the mandates of all Special Coordinators.

Mr. ISTRATE (Romania): Mr. President, it is a particular pleasure for me to congratulate you, on behalf of the Romanian delegation, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success in the fulfilment of your mandate, as we approach the final stage of our work this session, with the preparation of the report to the United Nations General Assembly already under way.

I have asked for the floor today in order to express the Romanian Government's support for the statement just delivered on behalf of Chile and Poland.

Romania is deeply concerned about the worsening of the humanitarian crisis provoked by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. We are therefore committed to contributing to the efforts aimed at coping with the global scourge of anti-personnel landmines towards the eventual elimination of these horrendous weapons. As an expression of that policy, my country voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, entitled "An international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines". In practical terms, Romania has observed, since 1995, a unilateral export moratorium on APLs, a measure which the Government intends to extend for a new three-year period. Apart from that, we expressed readiness to continue contributing to ongoing demining activities, as well as in terms of medical assistance to APL victims.

My country follows with interest the search for a solution to the sufferings and damage caused by landmines, undertaken by various international initiatives, in particular the "Ottawa Process". Along with the co-sponsors of today's statement on APLs, we hope that the convention which is to be concluded in December in that framework will represent a significant step forward on the road towards eliminating landmines for ever.

It is our considered view that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament of the international community, cannot stay outside the ever-growing trend of action against landmines. Participation in these efforts has increasingly become a question of credibility and relevance for our Conference. The Conference on Disarmament is a forum with large representation and valuable expertise. Acting complementarily with the "Ottawa Process", it could bring an invaluable contribution to the universal acceptance of a ban on APLs.

From this perspective, my country welcomed the appointment of a Special Coordinator to consult on a possible mandate for negotiations in the CD on the question of landmines. While congratulating Ambassador Campbell of Australia for the results achieved so far, we fully support the view that he needs more time to accomplish his mandate. It appears therefore necessary that the Conference request Ambassador Campbell to continue consulting delegations during the inter-sessional period and present a report by the beginning of the 1998 session.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation did not intend to take the floor at this meeting. Therefore, I shall save my congratulations to you for a future meeting. My delegation requested the floor in order to comment on the request by one of the Special Coordinators. However, it seems that His Excellency the Ambassador of Nigeria, the Coordinator of the Group of 21, has asked for the floor in order to present the position of the Group on this issue. Therefore I would prefer to let His Excellency the Ambassador of Nigeria speak.

Mr. HAYASHI (Japan): Mr. President, let me join previous speakers in congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency. My delegation has listened to the reports delivered by the four Special Coordinators with enthusiasm and admiration. All of them are very well thought out and certainly give hope to our shared sentiment that the CD should start substantive work.

Our delegation shares every point mentioned in the statement by the Chilean Ambassador, and thanks both Chile and Poland for their contribution in this respect. As has been stated and announced in Tokyo, my Government is going to Oslo as a full participant, and this is in order to support the noble endeavours of the Ottawa Process. We also share the view that the CD can make a significant contribution to reaching the goals of the United Nations on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. Concerning the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, considering the circumstances in which the Special Coordinator had to work, my delegation supports Chile and Poland and sincerely hopes that the CD will decide to allow him to continue his consultations during the inter-sessional period and to present a report at the first part of the 1998 session of the CD.

Mr. BOUCHAARA (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, my delegation would in its turn like to extend its sincere congratulations to you on taking over the presidency of this Conference. It would also like to thank the four Special Coordinators for the considerable amount of work which they have accomplished. I would like to make a brief comment on the report of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines. The delegation of Morocco takes note of the recommendations made by Ambassador Campbell of Australia, but is somewhat surprised at the tone of these recommendations. It would like to reiterate that no decision on the extension of a special coordinator's mandate can be taken before consultations have been carried out and consent secured from capitals. I hope that I have been sufficiently clear on this score and that I have been understood.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I wish to make two observations, one relating to the reports of the Special Coordinators and one relating to the statement by Chile and Poland. First of all, I should like to thank the Special Coordinators for their thoughtful and thought-provoking reports. Although, rightly, each was issued upon the author's own authority, I found them, returning as I am to the Conference after an absence of some years, a valuable introduction to the current state of thinking within the Conference on the areas we cover. I believe they bring out those areas where there is some prospect of reaching a measure of agreement and those areas where positions may be somewhat further apart. I think it is clear from the reports that the work of the Special Coordinators is not yet at an end. This does not, I suggest, reflect on their personal abilities, rather on the limited time available to them to carry out their work. Ambassador Seibert of Germany spoke of the Special Coordinators being permitted to continue work in the inter-sessional period. I would venture to go perhaps a little further and suggest that the Special Coordinators might actively be encouraged to do so.

I might come now to the statement made in the name of Chile and Poland. I wish to say that my Government wishes to associate itself with the sentiments expressed in that statement. My Government is fully committed to the Ottawa Process. I hope next week to have the honour of leading our delegation to the conference in Oslo, but I hope in due course, assuming a successful outcome for the Ottawa Process, to return to the Conference to take up the subject within the framework of the CD, and specifically, with reference to the statement by Chile and Poland, I would wish to support the request of Ambassador Campbell that he should continue his consultations during the inter-sessional period and to present us with a final report at the start of the 1998 session.

Mr. DACHO (Slovakia): Mr. President, may I congratulate you on the assumption of your responsible function and assure you of my delegation's full support? We are sure that with your vast experience and diplomatic skills you will steer this body to a successful conclusion of its annual session. Allow me to thank the previous speakers for their kind words addressed to Ambassador Krasnohorská. I should also like to express my delegation's deep gratitude to the Special Coordinators, whose diligent work has enabled us today to profit from their respective reports. I should like to emphasize our deep appreciation for their great effort. We shall study their reports with due attention. Among many interesting facts and conclusions, all the Special Coordinators have mentioned that the time span provided for their work had been very limited and directly or indirectly stated the need for further consultations. They also recommended that the CD continue consult tions during the inter-sessional period or during the next annual session. I did not intend to speak today, but this brings me to the other part of my short intervention.

Slovakia continues to support actively all initiatives aimed at the achievement of a ban on anti-personnel landmines. At this point, I should like to mention that Slovakia is a full participant in the Ottawa Process. The Slovak authorities consider the CD and the Ottawa Process complementary. The delegation to the CD has therefore been instructed to support all activities in this direction. We share the view that present activities should be aimed at creating the conditions for an immediate opening of negotiations on anti-personnel landmines at the 1998 CD session. We also believe that unlike the Ottawa Process, the CD can take into consideration different security aspects and make, in this way, a significant contribution to the ultimate goal of the elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The ultimate objective of the negotiations in the CD should be to produce a typical disarmament treaty through a gradual process, if necessary. At the same time, we should unequivocally state that the Ottawa Process and the CD negotiations have the potential of being mutually supportive and reinforcing.

This brings me to the conclusion of my brief intervention, but I should like to add the voice of the Slovak delegation to the previous speakers who spoke in favour of the extension of the mandate of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, the distinguished Ambassador John Campbell of Australia, with a view to enabling him to continue consultations in order to complete his task and submit to the CD a report during the first part of the 1998 session. In other words, I should also like to associate Slovakia with the joint statement by Chile and Poland. We would be equally ready to consider and support the extension of the other Special Coordinators' mandates at an appropriate time.

Mr. ANDREEV (Bulgaria): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to offer you the congratulations of my delegation upon the assumption of your important duties. We would also like to thank Ambassador Krasnohorská, who preceded you in the Chair.

I shall be very brief today. We did not intend to take the floor. We have listened with great interest and attention to the reports which have been presented by the Special Coordinators here, and we would like to thank them for the very deep and detailed work that has been done. My Government would like to associate itself with the statement presented by the distinguished Ambassador of Chile on behalf of his country and Poland. It has been a long-standing position of Bulgaria that the CD provides the most appropriate expertise to elaborate multilateral instruments in the very important field of disarmament. At the same time, my country is fully committed to the Ottawa Process, to the spirit and goals of the Ottawa Process, and we feel that the Ottawa Process and the CD are two forums which complement each other rather than compete. Consequently, we support the request to prolong the mandate of Ambassador Campbell in order to allow him to present the final report on the anti-personnel landmines issue at the beginning of next year's session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. ABUAH (Nigeria): I should like to join the previous speakers in extending our gratitude to the Special Coordinators for the reports they have just rendered on the assignment given to them by the Conference. Obviously, one needs to recall that the decision of the Conference to appoint the Special Coordinators was taken on 26 June. It was barely two months ago. Is it not astonishing that the Special Coordinators themselves have been able to produce the kind of synthesis of ideas which we have had this morning? They need our support, but it seems to me that we are barred, at this stage, by the rules of procedure. A mandate of the Special Coordinators is set within the framework of the 1997 Conference session. Now, as indeed Ambassador John Campbell said a moment ago when he made his statement, because of lack of time - and this is obvious and is very clear - he would want to have more time to complete his work. We in the Group of 21 feel that the matter should be considered in the context of the 1998 work of the Conference on Disarmament. In the course of the adoption of the agenda and programme of work of the Conference in 1998, we have heard discussions and comments made about possible consultations inter-sessionally in 1997. The CD is of course capable of taking a decision in this regard, but we feel that if the mandate lapses with the end of the 1997 session, it would be extremely difficult for the Special Coordinators to conduct inter-sessional consultations. At any rate, the Group of 21 would like to ask for a deferment of a decision on this matter to allow for more consultations. The coordinators of the other groups are very clear in their own minds about the position of the Group of 21 on this very question. This matter has been discussed on several occasions at the Presidential consultations. So there is no element of surprise at the point that was just made about the position of the Group of 21. So I do hope that the Conference will bear with us.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation did not originally intend to speak but, having heard many speakers, it wishes to make a few points.

As regards the work of the four Special Coordinators, we think there are some points on which everyone agrees. First, the Coordinators have all worked conscientiously and done a great deal, though three of them have operated differently from the fourth, conducting open-ended consultations while the remaining one has conducted bilateral consultations. The second point of agreement is that none of the four has completed his job. As regards the jobs themselves, the Coordinators all believe that the work must continue. Then there is another point - though a minor one - namely that all four Coordinators were appointed at the same time. From the logical point of view, given that their jobs are not completed, they must of course continue with their work. From the logical point of view again, since the Coordinators were all appointed at the same time and they have difficult jobs to do, no one has disagreed with what they have been doing, and we have no reason to change any of them. I am talking from the logical point of view. But the question is, when should these four Coordinators continue with their work? During the inter-sessional period, or when the next session begins? This is not a new question: it has cropped up many times before. I think it is a question that must be resolved on the basis of the actual situation. When this session ends, the Conference will naturally not have anything to do. But everyone knows that work on biological weapons will resume right away, and then there is the General Assembly. By then, in the circumstances, I am afraid, not everybody will be here. So working effectively during the inter-sessional period will, I fear, be hard. A second question is, should the subsequent work of the four Special Coordinators be considered in conjunction with the agenda and programme of work for the next session of the Conference? They would seem to be related. The Chinese delegation believes the whole situation must be taken into account. Now, within this framework, I should like to say a word or two about anti-personnel landmines.

There appear to be three forums for discussing the APL issue. One is the "Ottawa Process"; the second, for the sake of argument, we can call the "CD process". The third is the "Certain Conventional Weapons process". I fear that the Ottawa and CD processes differ in their very nature. Are they mutually supportive, mutually complementary? It is hard to say. Of course we hope so, or we used to - but now it is hard to say. Of course, one thing we can say is that they affect each other. Everyone remembers that towards the end of the second part of the session, many States said the Conference must get down to work - meaning that it should swiftly appoint a special coordinator for anti-personnel mines and draw up a mandate for him. That gave people the impression that the discussions on the mandate would be concluded in the third part of the session so that negotiations could start by the first part of next year's CD session. The Chinese delegation's position on APLs is crystal clear. I explained it thoroughly at our June session. We stated then that, out of respect for many States' wishes and to demonstrate our flexibility, we would agree to appoint a coordinator and commence work. As everyone will also recall, a month or so later - at the start of the third part of the session - some of the same countries said there was no need for precipitate action to deal with the question of APLs: the Conference should await the completion of the Ottawa Process. I am not quoting word for word, but many countries said something of the sort. During the second part of the session those countries had been propelling the work of CD forward very positively. The Chinese delegation regards this as an important change. What does it mean? Has something happened over the past month or so? Frankly, honestly, we do not understand. But given this change, the Chinese delegation will have to consider and review whether, next year, the Special Coordinator should or should not continue work on the question of APLs.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): First of all, Mr. President, it is my pleasant duty to convey the warm felicitations and sense of satisfaction of the Pakistan delegation at seeing you assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. This office comes to representatives to the CD in accordance with the turn of the wheel of fortune. It seems that this month the wheel of fortune has moved faster than normal. That is not unconnected with the discussions that we are having here this morning. But in any case, it is a befitting culmination of an outstanding tour of duty which you have had in Geneva, and I and many of your colleagues wish to acknowledge and pay you great tribute for these accomplishments. It is also my duty to express our satisfaction at the successful and eventful presidency of your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská. She was able to achieve what has escaped the fingers of several of her predecessors. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, Ambassador Illanes of Chile, Ambassador Pearson of New Zealand and Ambassador Soutar of the United Kingdom.

We have heard the reports of the four Special Coordinators this morning, and my delegation will study those comments very carefully, but at this stage, I would like to offer some brief comments on some of these reports. Firstly, we believe that Ambassador Zahran's report on improved and effective functioning is a thoughtful paper, which reflects the rich discussion that was held on this issue, and we would like to commend him in particular for the open and transparent manner in which those consultations were held. It must be noted, however, and we hope that our report to the General Assembly will note, that the working methods of the Conference are not the problem. But we can continue to work to improve our effectiveness.

As regards expansion, we agreed that there is no consensus yet, but perhaps our report should reaffirm that the observer States in the Conference on Disarmament have never had any difficulties in participating as fully as they wish in the work of the Conference, and I believe that those of them who remain interested in the work of the Conference will continue to participate actively in this work.

On the agenda and work programme, Ambassador Náray's report, we believe, reflects much of the ground which was covered by his predecessor, and we continue to hold to the view that the only consensus that exists on the international priorities for disarmament are reflected in the Final Document of the first special session.

Turning to the question of anti-personnel landmines, one is hesitant to make substantive comments on what has become a sort of a shell game: today here, tomorrow elsewhere. My delegation was the first to propose the establishment of the Special Coordinator on 30 January 1997, and I would like to say that we were happy when the Special Coordinator was finally appointed with the active support of many interested and relevant delegations. But it is difficult to follow a process where one does not know what the object is. I would say to those who wish to negotiate in the CD, which we believe is the relevant forum, that they must make up their minds whether they wish to run with the hares or hunt with the hounds. We believe the CD is the relevant forum, but the effort to open negotiations in the CD must be pursued with the seriousness that it deserves, not with vacillation and confusion. Ambassador Campbell has in his statement stated his impressions. I would note that he has consulted over 55 delegations of the 61 members of this Conference. Unfortunately, he did not get around to the delegation of Pakistan. Perhaps this was because there is the impression that we do not possess anti-personnel landmines, or perhaps because it is felt that there is no interest on the part of the Pakistan delegation on this issue, or perhaps it is felt that we have no views on this matter. Hopefully, we will be able to correct these misapprehensions at a subsequent stage.

With regard to the proposal to extend the mandate of one or more of the Special Coordinators, I would like to reiterate that our rules of procedure envisage the termination of the officers of this Conference, except for the office of the presidency. The presidency of this Conference is the continuity between one session and the next. Therefore, while we agree that further work is required, we must find a modality to conduct such further work, whether on APLs or on other issues, through the modalities that are provided in the rules of procedure. We note of course that Ambassador Campbell himself has stated in his report that delegations "would prefer to decide on a specific mandate [on APLs] in early 1998", and therefore the proposal for inter-sessional consultations does not possess the same urgency as would be the case if, for example, we would all determine to open negotiations in the CD and not await other events.

My delegation would like to suggest that you, Sir, as President of the Conference, should be entrusted with the authority to call for informal consultations on the issue of APLs and on any other issue that you consider relevant in the period from the end of our current session to the beginning of our 1998 session, or to the end of the year, when your presidency will end. This would allow us to get together, if circumstances arise which create the possibility for genuine negotiations on APLs in the CD. It is under those circumstances that my delegation would be very happy to join in such consultations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and for his kind words to me. We have five more requests for the floor, from the delegations of Venezuela, the United States of America, Argentina, Spain and Syria. I believe this list is correct, and I would now like to give the floor to the delegation of Venezuela.

Mr. CORRALES REAL (Venezuela) (translated from Spanish): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as President for this session. I am not going to make a general statement but will confine myself to a comment on the subject of anti-personnel landmines, the report on the consultations which was introduced by Ambassador Campbell of Australia, whom we congratulate, along with the other Coordinators, for the work they have accomplished and the reports presented here today on the different subjects. My delegation shares the view of a large number of delegations that the Conference should consider the subject of anti-personnel landmines and of course include it on its agenda for future work. Naturally, in our view, the mandate of the Conference should be the subject of consultations and bilateral contacts, especially, and we agree with a sizeable group of delegations, under the coordination of Ambassador Campbell, the extension of whose mandate we support at this point in time. My delegation considers that progress in the proceedings of the Oslo Conference, which my country will attend, and the adoption of an instrument on this subject is going to have major repercussions on the mandate that the Conference on Disarmament might decide to have in relation to the handling of this subject in the future. We think that the Ottawa Process and the mandate of the Conference on this subject, although different arrangements because of their very nature, should be considered as complementary and compatible and in no way mutually exclusive or contradictory. My delegation, in concluding this brief declaration, wishes to express its support in general terms for the document introduced by the Ambassador of Chile on behalf of his country and Poland.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): As with others, it had not been the intention of my delegation to seek the floor this morning, but the discussion has been interesting, and I think we would like to make a few remarks.

(Ms. Crittenberger, United States)

On the first point, we would like to take note of the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile on behalf of Chile and Poland, and to note that this is fully consistent with those views on APLs held by my Government. Indeed, I spoke to this issue last week in plenary and I will not go into detail on those comments now. I would, however, like to recall the United States support for negotiations on a global APL ban in the CD, and in that context, to note that the rationale behind that support includes the fact that many major historical APL producers and exporters have said that they will not participate in the Oslo negotiations, nor sign any treaty that results. Consequently, we are dedicated to continue our efforts to work toward a global ban in the CD on a step-by-step basis, even after the Ottawa treaty has been completed, and in that context, we have welcomed comments made over the last several months by some of those countries that will not participate in the Oslo meeting on their willingness to look into this issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

On the subject of the work of the Special Coordinators, I would like to join my voice with those of others in thanking them for their reports and for the energetic manner in which they tackled their tasks. The reports, of course, are on their own cognizance, but they offer us much valuable food for thought. As has already been noted, there is a common feature in all four reports - that there was not enough time to do enough work to enable the Coordinators to present consensus reports or definitive conclusions. Each Coordinator noted that further efforts would be required to reach that point. It has been rightly pointed out that new decisions will be required regarding any continuation of this work. Indeed, I presume that is why the Coordinators either recommended that their work continue or sought an extension of their mandates, because of their assumption that we would indeed have to take a new decision. It was not a presumption that they could continue their work without such a request.

At the same time, I wish to point out that our rules of procedure do not specifically address the question of appointments of special coordinators. This is an informal arrangement. The CD can make any working arrangements it desires, on a consensus basis. We assume, of course, that no one would wish to prevent the continuation of this valuable work, which will contribute to helping the CD make progress where it can. My delegation adds its voice to those of others that have proposed that we, the CD, decide before our session concludes how to continue this work. In our annual report to the United Nations General Assembly we could reflect those decisions, at least those we can reach at this point, on how to carry on such work. As an example, the Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning has recommended that efforts be continued in 1998. The CD could positively reflect this recommendation in the report, as indeed has been done in past reports. I believe in 1994, for example, it was agreed in the CD to reflect in the report the extension of the work of the then Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning for the following year. As for the work of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, it seems to my delegation that this is relevant to the consideration of the substantive work that the CD might undertake next year. Consequently, it is our view that the CD should decide to ask the Coordinator to continue his consultations on a possible mandate and report back to us at the outset of the 1998 session so it can be factored into our decision-making on the substantive work the CD would undertake. I recall again that there are precedents for this kind of decision-making. Indeed, I believe in 1994 the then Canadian Ambassador Shannon, as Special Coordinator on fissile material cut-off, was asked to continue his consultations into the following year and report back, and there are other examples of this, so it would not be unprecedented for us to take a forward-looking view on what it is that we might want to do next year.

As a final remark, let me support the motion raised by the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan that you and the next CD President should undertake efforts to consult on how we might get a jump-start to the 1998 session.

Mr. BENITEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): In view of the time, I will be very brief. My delegation first of all wishes to thank the four Special Coordinators for the excellent reports that they have presented to us. As we are, in a sense, focusing on a specific debate, and time is pressing, I will go directly to the point we are discussing in one way or another, and that is to express our interest in participating in, and our commitment to the success of, the Ottawa Process, which all the delegations here understand. This, however, does not cause us to lose sight of the fact that we have always maintained that the CD has a complementary role that should be coherent and mutually supportive with the agreements we hope to reach in Oslo. Of course, this is not an isolated position on our part, but one shared with a large majority of delegations, many of them, which have spoken in the course of this morning. This is why we attach special importance to the possibility of keeping up the momentum that this subject currently enjoys after the Oslo meeting, and in that regard we view as very useful and positive the suggestion made by our Special Coordinator, Ambassador Campbell, supported of course by the statements of several delegations that have spoken during the course of this morning, to the effect that his mandate should be extended over the inter-sessional period. Certainly this also ties in with our own opinion concerning the role of special coordinators: it is our understanding that it is not in any way their task to prejudge or shape decisions, but simply to prepare the ground for the consensus which has eluded us this year, and certainly this year consensus has run faster than our will has and we have caught up with it only on rare occasions, and one of them was the very moment when we appointed those Special Coordinators.

My delegation considers that the considerations set forth by the Group of 21 in the shape of its spokesman, the Ambassador of Nigeria, are very important, and we think that the rules of procedure should be respected, but we also think that they are not sacrosanct - the rules of procedure are at the service of the work of the Conference. In that regard, we listened very carefully to the need not to prejudge the 1998 agenda, and we do not think that carrying out preparatory work to enable us to take a better decision would necessarily mean that we were prejudging such a decision. The Special Coordinators will be able to continue their work during the inter-sessional period. I can assure you that every one of our delegations will take whatever decision it deems fit at the beginning of the next session in a totally independent spirit, undoubtedly better enlightened by work which is willingly being made available to the Conference and which we should not underestimate. We also take into consideration the need to allow for consultation with capitals, not least for this decision which we are, in a way, putting before ourselves now, to extend the mandates, and in this regard it seems to us very important that this matter should remain on the agenda for the few meetings that we still have left till the end of the year.

The Ambassador of Pakistan made a very important statement. The first thing that emerges in our view is that in the inter-sessional period Ambassador Campbell should consult the delegation of Pakistan, which of course always has a very clear view and makes a contribution which is by no means negligible. I believe that is an additional reason why Ambassador Campbell should not stop working during the inter-sessional period. As for the possibility that you, Mr. President, should take charge of the informal consultations, that would certainly be a source of great pleasure to us, but I think that it would give you extra work which possibly in the course of the coming year should normally be undertaken by the Special Coordinator. It would also be more efficient for you to make use of this possibility of continuing to apply to Ambassador Campbell during the inter-sessional period the mandate which was conferred on him.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina. We still have four more requests for the floor, from Spain, Syria, France and Australia, and with your consent, given the time - it is almost 15 minutes to 1 o'clock - I would like to close the list of speakers with these four names, if that is acceptable. The representative of Pakistan has the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): With all due respect, I do not think that we have a rule of procedure which allows the closure of the list of speakers. We do not know what will be said, and if it is necessary to come into the discussion, we will have to come in. So, with all due respect, I hope the statements will be brief and that it will not be necessary for additional statements to be made.

The PRESIDENT: We shall continue with the representative of Spain, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. MARTINEZ MORCILLO (Spain) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I shall try to heed your request and your hope that the next few statements will be as brief as possible, with an exception to that request, and that exception is to enable me to convey to you my very sincere congratulations on taking the Chair, and to wish you with the greatest sincerity every success in carrying out this task. I would also be remiss if I were not to note on this occasion the effective and skilful work performed by your predecessor, the Ambassador of Slovakia.

I wish to refer to two specific circumstances, and to try to outline a series of political consequences from my standpoint. The first circumstance I wish to refer to is the remarkable presentations that we have heard this morning from the four Special Coordinators on the specific subjects they have been dealing with. I followed their statements very carefully and I cannot fail to convey my very sincere congratulations to them for the content of each of the reports, with different styles, certainly, but I think that they all reflect the positions set out in the various discussions, and of course my delegation can identify, in each of these reports, those points to which it had access when it participated in the open-ended consultations, both general and regional. However, without entering into further detail for the moment concerning the value of these four reports, which I underline, I would like to refer to two facts that arise out of their presentation.

The first is that these four reports come from representatives of three of the regional groups in this Conference on Disarmament. In that variety in the origin of the reports, and without in the slightest affecting their impartial and neutral character, I think I can perceive an expression of the attempt to unite positions and the attempt to arrive at a convergence of positions among the various delegations that are present in this Conference. The fact that these Special Coordinators are representing a broad range of the political positions that exist in this Conference should not be overlooked. There is an incontestable fact, a clear consequence, in the presentation of the four reports, which is that the four Special Coordinators have said for various reasons, on various grounds, that they have not had time to present and make progress in their conclusions. This political representativeness, combined with the proven impartiality of the designated Special Coordinators, would require this Conference to take a further step to keep them in their posts and thereby ensure that in due course they would be able to submit reports that will facilitate progress in the work of this Conference.

The other point to which I also wish to refer, and from which I would also like to draw political consequences, is the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile on behalf of his delegation and on behalf of the delegation of Poland. For me it is significant that this statement - and I would like to say straight away that I endorse it and associated myself with it - has been presented by a representative of the Group of 21 and therefore has been presented on behalf of a delegation in the Group of 21 and also on behalf of a delegation from the Eastern European Group, and therefore this statement also to some extent reflects an attempt to make headway in bringing together the different positions that exist in the Conference. Consequently, I too would like to underline this important characteristic which can be inferred from the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile. At the same time I would not like to miss this opportunity to say once again that my delegation associates itself with the points contained in it for two reasons. First, because there is no doubt that one of the topics that is currently a focus of world attention is the topic of mines. There is no doubt that this is one of the issues that is currently enjoying the most coverage by the mass media, but there is equally no doubt, or at least this is the view of my delegation, that the laudable objectives pursued under the "Ottawa Process" cannot be attained unless they have a counterpart that takes account of the important aspect which is also involved in the mines issue, which is the aspect, or the consequences of this in the sphere of disarmament and its impact on the national security interests and concerns of countries. Therefore my delegation fully endorses the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile, and equally, reiterating my support and my hope that this Conference will be able to renew the mandates of the four Special Coordinators, I attach special importance to the renewal of the appointment of the Ambassador of Australia because of the special characteristics attached to his case.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I shall try to be brief in spite of the fact that the subjects tabled for discussion are very important. First of all, on behalf of my country's delegation, I would like to thank the four Special Coordinators for the statements they made today. We will certainly study these statements and, if necessary, comment thereon in due course. For the moment, I would like to comment on the report of the Special Coordinator, His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia.

Firstly, we believe that His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia was probably more fortunate than the other four Special Coordinators because he had a specific and clear-cut mandate. However, the statement he made today gave my delegation the impression that the Special Coordinator had exceeded this mandate. The Ambassador of Australia said in his statement that he saw his role as being

(continued in English)

"to identify both the common ground and those issues on which opinions differ, and then to attempt to come up with a proposal ...".

(continued in Arabic)

The mandate of the Special Coordinator which was specified in document CD/1466 does not give him the authority to present any proposals. The first paragraph of his mandate stipulates that his mandate is

(continued in English)

"to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines".

(continued in Arabic)

Therefore this mandate includes carrying out consultations only and presenting a report on these consultations.

Secondly, His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia has asked the Conference to extend his mandate once again so that he can present a final report. However, the third paragraph of his mandate stipulates that the Special Coordinator has to present a report as soon as possible -

(continued in English)

"an early report" -

(continued in Arabic)

and I believe that the beginning of the 1998 session cannot be described as early. Our position in the Group of 21 - and here I would like to remind the Ambassador of Spain of the fact that the Coordinator of the Group of 21 is Nigeria and not any other country, and any other country that spoke at this meeting spoke only in its national capacity - was announced yesterday during the Presidential consultations and was reaffirmed today by the Coordinator of the Group of 21; namely that the Group of 21 is of the opinion that the mandates of the Special Coordinators will end on the conclusion of this year's session, that is to say on 10 September.

Now, as regards the proposal made by His Excellency the Ambassador of Pakistan, we can support such a proposal provided that the President is mandated to conduct consultations on the programme of work for the 1998 session and not specifically on landmines, because we do not understand why landmines should be accorded a special status and highlighted. The problem this year has not been landmines; it has been the fact that no agreement has been reached on an integrated programme of work. Therefore, if the mandate assigned to the President is to conduct consultations on a programme of work for the 1998 session, we can support this proposal.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to extend to you and the four Special Coordinators all the thanks and congratulations of the French delegation. We shall of course study these four reports with the greatest attention.

Permit me briefly to note, in connection with the report submitted by Ambassador Zahran, that my delegation is particularly pleased that he has been able to find so many areas of convergence, and that we consider that this report should guide our work next year, because it contains many useful suggestions.

Turning to the report presented by Ambassador Kreid, we admire the subtlety with which he has been able to present points for consideration on a difficult subject, and I would venture to say that, for those who know how subtle his approach is, it is clear that he has discreetly indicated a possible way out of the difficulties he faced. We will find inspiration in his report for what we have to do on this issue next year.

Ambassador Náray's report is certainly the most substantive one, and maybe, given this year's deadlock, the one on which our consultations ought to continue in the greatest depth. France hopes that the General Assembly of the United Nations will also give us some ideas on how to emerge from this deadlock.

Finally, with regard to Ambassador Campbell's report, my delegation has taken note of the comments made by many delegations on this subject. I simply wish to express our support to Ambassador Campbell, in the same way as to his three colleagues. It is the duty of all delegations to give them support because they are working for all of us, and the authority of the Special Coordinators reflects that of the Conference itself. The task which Ambassador Campbell has to carry out, which is to lead us towards a possible negotiating mandate on anti-personnel mines in this Conference under item 6 of our agenda, is an especially difficult mandate. We regret that, as his first two reports attest, a consensus has not yet taken shape on such a mandate.

France has always been in the forefront of the fight against anti-personnel mines, and the measures we have taken at the national level show how serious our commitment is, leading us to renounce mines completely by the end of 1999 at the latest. It was in this context that my country decided to join the Ottawa Process, whose main provisions it is indeed already implementing at the national level. But on the eve of the opening of the Oslo conference, we have a twofold concern: we would like as many countries as possible to join us in working towards a total ban, and in particular the countries which produce or use anti-personnel mines on a large scale today. If they are not present, the efforts of the international community to reach the goal set by United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S would be doomed to remain incomplete. In that spirit, we hope that the legitimate attention given to the Ottawa Process today will not conceal the scale of the task which will remain to be accomplished next year in the Conference on Disarmament. It is there that the dialogue was initiated to prepare for negotiations based on the principle of consensus; it is there that the challenge of a universal ban on anti-personnel mines needs to be taken up. My country hopes that the entire international community will recognize the reality of what has happened over the last nine months: the Ottawa Process, the work in the Conference on Disarmament and the progressive implementation of Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects are not only complementary but are mutually reinforcing. As at least one delegation has emphasized this morning, a development here leads to repercussions elsewhere. It is in that spirit that my delegation would like to reiterate its support for Ambassador Campbell, to emphasize the priority attached to the speedy conclusion of his work. It is also in that spirit that France approves of the inspiration behind what was said by the Ambassador of Chile, as well as the idea of extending the mandate of the four Special Coordinators during the inter-sessional period. The French delegation notes that three delegations have requested time to think: this must be respected. We hope that a reply can be provided before we complete our work. It is in that spirit, finally, that we support the proposal made by the Ambassador of Pakistan in the terms in which he couched it.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France. I have two more speakers on my list, and since we have to resume our session in the afternoon in an informal plenary meeting to consider the draft annual report, we should try to finish our meeting, if possible, within the next five minutes. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): I am sure I spoke for my fellow Coordinators in thanking delegations for the kind words that they have used to describe the way in which we have each of us carried out our responsibilities. I must say the support and encouragement we have received is appreciated.

In response to the comments made by our distinguished colleague from Pakistan, I would like to say that the order in which I saw delegations had much more to do with their availability during the holiday months of July and August than the weight I placed on their likely contributions to my consultations. That said, I might remind him that we did have a preliminary discussion on APLs when he called on me several weeks ago to press the claims of a Pakistani national as a candidate for a high position with a certain specialized agency. However, I would like to say that it is an acknowledgement of Ambassador Akram's long experience in this body and the value that I place on his opinions and judgements that I have in a sense saved him for one of the last of my interlocutors in order more fully to discuss with him the range of opinions that I have encountered and to seek his guidance on the way he thinks I ought to proceed. As my mandate has not yet expired, I look forward to being able to do so in the near future.

With regard to the comments made by the representative of Syria, if Special Coordinators were to carry out their tasks on the terms that he described, we would not need Special Coordinators at all. We could have questionnaires or a show of hands in the plenary. My view and understanding is that Special Coordinators are appointed to try and find a constructive way out of impasses that we find ourselves in in this body. I must say that as long as I remain Special Coordinator, that is the approach that will guide my responsibilities.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): This is purely a procedural question. It has nothing to do with landmines, so everybody in the room can start breathing again. The point I would like to make is that we had rashly, as Canada, convened another meeting at 3 o'clock this afternoon. I just wanted to take a second of your time, and I apologize for that, to ask those delegations which are members of the expanded Western Group on United Nations topics to remain behind quickly, briefly after this meeting so that we can sort ourselves out, given your intention to continue in the informal plenary this afternoon. So, expanded Western Group members, two minutes at the conclusion of your meeting, and I again apologize for taking up some of your time.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I am grateful to the distinguished Ambassador of Australia for having taken the trouble to respond to my comment. I would just like to say two things about this. Firstly, I am sure he will agree that the informal chat in which we spent a couple of minutes in passing on APLs did not constitute the consultations that he intended to hold with all delegations. Secondly, I was available throughout the months, with a very short period in Geneva for such consultations. Thirdly, the position of my delegation with respect to the question of special coordinators is not related to whether or not we were consulted. It is related to the fact that the situation has become totally murky as far as the negotiations on APLs are concerned, and I do not think I need to explain that much further. I already have perhaps said more than I should. But the situation is absolutely murky on APLs. We would like to see what happens. We will then decide how to proceed. If delegations are serious about negotiating on APLs within the Conference on Disarmament, we would like to see proof of that. We can then proceed to negotiate a mandate. Therefore, for the moment, at the present time, no consultations are required. We can all relax, do BW, do the General Assembly. Once we know what happens, then we will be in a position to consult and you, Mr. President, are in the best position, as the President of this Conference, to pick up the strings, look at the work programme, as our colleague from Syria said, and look at the issue of APLs and see where we can go next year. That is our approach, and we hope that there will be agreement on this.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for your statement. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

We have heard the various shades of opinion with regard to the extensions of a new mandate or mandates of Special Coordinators. There were references or requests to extend the mandates. Some were of the opinion that we could do this next year. Some others thought that we should refer the matter to the capitals. There was a view that the President could hold consultations during the inter-sessional period. And finally, Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of 21, stated that a decision on this matter should be deferred to enable that particular group to hold consultations.

Taking into consideration the manner in which we take decisions in this forum, I believe we have to give ourselves a little bit of time for further consultations. Also, I have noted the point made by one delegation, at least, that we had worked inter-sessionally in the past, on one or two occasions, but in fact what we have to bear in mind here is whether there is consensus to entrust that kind of function to the Special Coordinator or Coordinators to undertake such work inter-sessionally, whether there is a consensus in this regard. Since we are going to meet informally this afternoon, perhaps we can give ourselves a little bit of time and think about it and come back with our own views.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to inform you that, in view of the late hour, the informal plenary meeting to start the consideration of the draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.489, will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Thursday, 4 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

ONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.777
4 September 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 4 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 777th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to the newly appointed representative of Poland, Ambassador Krzysztof Jakubowski, who is attending the Conference for the first time today. Before joining the Conference, Ambassador Jakubowski held important functions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the post of Under-Secretary of State. I am sure that his wide experience in United Nations matters in general and disarmament in particular will be a valuable asset to this Conference. I wish to assure him of our full cooperation and support.

I should also like to welcome the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Ambassador Eitan Bentsur, who will be our first speaker for today.

In addition to the representative of Israel, I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Ireland, Indonesia and, I believe, Australia.

I now give the floor to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Ambassador Eitan Bentsur.

Mr. BENTSUR (Israel): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. With your long experience, we are assured of skilful steering of the work of the Conference, as it moves towards the General Assembly. At the same time, I would like to express our thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská of Slovakia. I also take the opportunity to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and to his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their effective support.

In days of old, the prophets of Israel gave voice to the message of universal peace and disarmament, to which the Jewish people have held fast and which is now Israel's heritage.

> "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid" (Micah, chap. 4, verses 3-4).

The goal to which Israel constantly aspires is to live in a region where comprehensive and lasting relations of peace prevail, based on reconciliation between peoples, good-neighbourliness, open borders, and trust among nations.

Israel wishes to see the whole region come around to these fundamental principles and norms, which should govern relations between States and have been the backbone of transition from war and conflict to peace and reconciliation in other regions.

An agreement on these principles and norms in our region will provide a catalyst to the peace process and, moreover, pave the way for arms control and regional security arrangements.

The basis for coexistence between Israel and Arab States was laid in the peace treaties between Israel and its Egyptian and Jordanian neighbours. The Madrid Conference, to which I had the honour of contributing, also bears the special emblem of the "pioneers of peace", to whom the present Government of Israel is direct heir.

Mutual Israeli-Palestinian recognition and the firm commitment of the present Israeli Government to honour the Oslo Accords are also closely tied to peace realities forged with our close neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. One should not forget that in parallel with the political negotiations to achieve and promote comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, the partners to peace should also have the will and capacity to contain the dangers and enemies of peace.

In its pursuit of peace, the Government of Israel is guided by a number of principles, which I would like to elaborate. First, peace must come with security. Peace must enhance security for all concerned. Security is neither an obsession nor a blind belief. It touches upon our very existence in a region where threats and instability still prevail, to the detriment of a peaceful and cooperative regional relationship.

The present political process, which reflects a growing recognition of the futility of the use of force as a means to advance political goals, has not yet fundamentally and irreversibly changed the basic strategic setting or, more correctly, the general state of threat in which Israel - and not only Israel - exists and operates. The willingness to renounce the threat or use of force, as well as the obligation to settle conflicts by peaceful means, is not yet shared by all our neighbours. War and violence are still considered and indeed advocated by some as legitimate instruments of policy. Limitations inherent in arms control regimes are deemed by some to be marginal obstacles to be ignored or, worse, as convenient loopholes to gain access to technologies necessary to produce weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Israel is confronted with heavily armed regimes, which profess various degrees of hostility toward it and which possess conventional and non-conventional arsenals.

In this geo-strategic setting, Israel finds itself small in size with no strategic depth. It is entirely dependent on outside sources of energy and is also poor in other natural resources, including water. The density of its population and industrial centres makes Israel especially vulnerable to

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attacks. Massive quantities of bombs and missiles, capable of indiscriminate damage and injury to the civilian population, are certainly defined by us as weapons of mass destruction.

Israel's national security doctrine and capabilities are designed to offset these strategic vulnerabilities and disadvantageous disparities.

Second, it is imperative to preserve the peace process, free of terrorism and violence. Terrorism is supported, financed, encouraged and practised by radical regimes in our region. It has assumed many forms, which are designed to disrupt the daily life of the civilian population, to undermine its resolve and to damage the economy of Israel. Above all, terrorism aims at derailing the peace process which the Government of Israel and others in the region and beyond are striving to advance.

Third, regional cooperation as well as economic and social development are critical factors in ensuring peace and stability in the long run. Israel wishes to share, as an equal partner, in the creation of regional cooperation. We do not seek to impose economic cooperation on our neighbours, nor do we wish to oblige them to cooperate with us. Still, we firmly believe that the evolution of cooperation and normalization across Arab-Israel boundaries is essential, not only to move the region to a more peaceful environment and to give true meaning and deep roots to relations of peace, but also to give Israel and the other parties a genuine sense of security that will, in turn, facilitate more ambitious arms control undertakings.

Fourth, peace and normalization are one and indivisible. Normalization is the natural product of conflict resolution. Consequently, the logic of peace and dialogue dictates that reconciliation and normalization will not be held hostage to other ends. Reconciliation between the peoples of the region and normalization among its countries must cease for ever the residue of ideological negativeness and negation.

Israel aspires to achieve peace and security for all the peoples of the Middle East, with a life free of threats and from the use of force. In this context, we hope that the day will come when a regional security framework encompassing all countries of the Middle East, as the region shall be defined, will be realized to provide a cooperative multilateral response to all the security problems of the Middle East.

The advantages of the regional approach are several - in the first instance, as a means of building trust and confidence, and thereafter of putting arms control and disarmament mechanisms into place. They by far outweigh the global approach, which cannot provide a response to the unique security problems of the Middle East in general, and to those of Israel in particular. For this reason, Israel welcomed the establishment of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS), in the context of the multilateral talks within the framework of the Middle East peace process initiated in Madrid. This group is, in our view, an essential pillar to support the peace process as a whole and an integral part of it.

In this respect, the Middle East could certainly learn from the experiences of other regions - Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Pacific, where genuine efforts on the regional level have created mutually beneficial regional security frameworks.

In its approach to this process, Israel is guided by the need to set ambitious objectives, the pursuit of which should be conducted in a pragmatic and realistic manner. Progress should be sought wherever and whenever possible - and its pace should be determined by conditions prevailing in the region. After peaceful relations and reconciliation are established among all States in the region, Israel will endeavour to establish in the Middle East - through direct negotiations among all its members - a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles, based on mutual and effective verification.

No other forums that lack the unique regional features of the Madrid Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security can bring about meaningful progress in realizing such an ambitious arms control agenda.

Until that hoped-for time, Israel will strive, as first steps, to conduct a regional security dialogue and to implement confidence-building measures that will increase openness and build trust and cooperation, thereby making a significant contribution to ease tensions, reduce the prospects of surprise attacks, diminish the levels of suspicion and prevent armed conflict. The trust that will be built, and the parallel progress in the bilateral peace process between Israel and its neighbours, will enable the beginning of negotiations on more ambitious arms control measures.

In its concept of, and thinking on, arms control and a regional security framework, Israel is guided by several premises. First, the arms control and regional security process should enhance the security of each and every one of the States taking part in it, thereby contributing to the stability and security of the region as a whole. Second, all steps and measures to be adopted throughout the arms control and regional security process must be designed so as to increase the overall stability of the region. At no point should they diminish the security of any State, nor should they allow, at any stage of the process, any State or group of States to abuse them in order to acquire a military advantage over the others. Third, each State is entitled to an equally high level of overall security, defined as freedom from threats to its existence and well-being. Thus, structural vulnerabilities should be compensated for by offsetting capabilities. Requirements of self-defence and deterrence of aggression are the only legitimate needs that should be taken into consideration in the arms control and regional security process. Fourth, every State in the region has the right to define the threat it considers relevant to its own security. All States of the region will be called upon to do so with a view to having the arms control and the regional security process provide adequate responses to them. Fifth, the process and the agreements that may be achieved should take into account not only threats and capabilities from individual States (and non-State entities), but also threats and capabilities deriving from coalitions and treaties as well as from political and regional military alliances and accords between States of the region.

We regret that the promising discussions and activities of the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group have been brought to a halt by a few, who would wish to impose certain conditions and an extraneous agenda on its work. We are hopeful of an early resumption of the Group's work and we look forward to that.

Against this background, let me expand on some process guidelines of our arms control and regional security approach as outlined above. First, the primacy of the peace process, and of the eventual peace which is to be durable and comprehensive. All regional security and arms control issues should be dealt with in this context. Second, the peace process is a regional one and must embrace every country of the region. Within this regional framework, confidence-building and security measures have to be developed. Only on such a basis can regional arms control arrangements be achieved. Third, a step-by-step approach is required. Any attempt to advance items on the overall agenda which can only be addressed at a later stage in the process will be self-defeating. Fourth, and ultimately, it is the progress achieved in the transformation of the region into a more peaceful, stable and secure environment that will govern the pace and scope of arms control measures that will be negotiated and effectively implemented in the region.

As I have indicated, Israel, when assessing its own situation, attaches primacy to regional arrangements which attempt to provide an answer to security and stability problems in the entire region. At the same time, this approach has not prevented Israel from supporting or taking part in the concerted effort of the international community to curb proliferation of either conventional or non-conventional weapons and ballistic missiles and, where appropriate, to endorse global agreements which could complement those to be established at the regional level.

Indeed, Israel has been actively supporting and participating in efforts of the international community to prevent the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, not least through export control mechanisms, inspired by those of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Australian Group (AG), and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), of which Israel is an adherent.

With its commitment to non-proliferation in mind, Israel voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly resolution 2373 of 1968, adopting the NPT. It is satisfied with the indefinite extension of the Treaty. At the same time, for the reasons I have elaborated, Israel does not find in the NPT an adequate response to its own security problems and regional concerns - and that without mentioning violations of NPT obligations by a regional party to the Treaty.

Israel joins the community of nations in welcoming the entry into force of the Convention banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and mandating their complete destruction. Israel is proud to have been one of the original, founding signatory States of the Convention. Our signature of the Convention and the subsequently active role we took in the joint endeavour to craft it into workable mechanisms reflect in general Israel's vision of the world in which it wishes to exist and prosper - in particular its continuing interest, which is shared by many other countries, to preserve the Convention's core balance between a State's duty to demonstrate compliance and its right to protect itself from intrusive and abusive encroachment on its security and its commercial and proprietary interests. By signing the Convention, Israel signalled its hope that others in its region will soon follow suit.

Israel belongs to those member States which have not yet ratified the Convention. This should come as no surprise to the world community cognizant of the unique strategic and political environment in which Israel still operates today. At the signing ceremony in Paris in 1993, Israel's Foreign Minister openly stated Israel's position that "the Chemical Weapons Convention must refer to our region and that the region at large must adhere to its principles". In that context, Israel then made it clear that it would seek to ratify the Convention subject to regional concerns as well as to its constitutional constraints and legislative timetable.

These considerations remain no less valid today. Israel is aware of, indeed it welcomes, the fact that certain Arab States have signed, and that some have even ratified the Convention. However, it is unfortunately also a well-known reality that none of the CW-capable or suspected CW-armed Arab States have signed, let alone ratified, the Chemical Weapons Convention. Indeed, key non-signatory Arab States have indicated collectively that they would not change their position even if Israel ratifies the Convention. Among them are countries which in the past have resorted to actual use of chemical weapons and which are believed to be developing capabilities in this field, even as the world is pledging to forsake and eradicate for ever all chemical weapons. From Israel's perspective, not only have CW threats against it not receded in recent years, but they have even gained in saliency and acuteness. What I have described, therefore, must not necessarily be construed as prejudging the outcome of a future Israeli decision on the matter of the ratification, or of the continued Israeli support for the Convention. Favourable changes in the security climate will, of course, favourably affect Israel's attitude on the ratification issue.

Israel is a party to the Convention on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects (CCW). Israel ratified this Convention in March 1995 and participated in the Review Conference, which amended Protocol II of the Convention on Landmines and adopted a new Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons. Israel is presently reviewing the Revised Landmines Protocol and the new Blinding Laser Protocol. Moreover, we support the efforts being made to extend accession to the CCW by as many States as possible, particularly in the Middle East region.

Israel has declared a moratorium on the exportation of anti-personnel landmines and has recently extended it for a further three-year period until 1999. Israel has joined efforts by the international community in clearing landmines in Angola. We are presently evaluating the possibilities of using Israeli expertise in mine clearance in other parts of the world.

Due to Israel's unique situation in the Middle East, involving an ongoing threat of hostilities from neighbouring and regional States, as well as terrorist threats and actions along its borders, Israel is still obliged to maintain its ability to use anti-personnel landmines as necessary, for self-defence in general and along the borders in particular. Any such use of anti-personnel landmines is in accordance with the requirements of the CCW. Accordingly, Israel is unable, at this juncture, to commit itself to a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines until effective alternative measures are available to ensure the protection of civilians threatened on a daily basis by terrorists, and to ensure the protection of Israeli defence forces operating in areas of armed conflict. At the same time, Israel supports a gradual process in which each State will undertake to cease proliferation of anti-personnel landmines, accept restrictions on possible use and, once circumstances permit, a ban on the production and use of anti-personnel landmines.

Israel would like to give its assurances that within the constraints mentioned above, it will continue to be a part of the global effort to reduce the need for, and the use of, anti-personnel landmines.

Israel welcomes the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the recent report by the Secretary-General on the Register. Israel has responded on a year-by-year basis since the inception of the Register to the request, contained in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, to provide data on its imports and exports of arms. A similar attitude by all regional parties in the Middle East would certainly contribute to confidence and trust-building in the region.

Israel's decision to sign the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is another manifestation and extension of its long-standing non-proliferation policy as described today. We joined the Partial Test-Ban Treaty (PTBT) as early as January 1964 and we are now moving forward on the CTBT.

In this context, I would like to recall my country's contribution, politically and conceptually, to the negotiations and to the drafting of the CTBT. Although the CTBT language does not satisfactorily address some of our major concerns, we supported the final text. We co-sponsored the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly and were among the first to sign thereafter. Israel also attaches great importance to the attitude of its regional neighbours to the Treaty. Their decision to become a party to the Treaty will play a supportive role at a regional level and will contribute to peace and security in the Middle East. In considering the issue of ratifying the CTBT, Israel will take into account inter alia developments in our region, including the adherence to the Treaty by key States.

By adopting these steps and policies, Israel has demonstrated its willingness to be involved in a responsible and serious manner in the efforts of the international community to prevent the spread of conventional as well as non-conventional weapons.

Israel welcomes the agreements signed in recent years between the Russian Federation and the United States regarding their strategic weapons. These agreements, which reflect the new and promising climate in relations between those two States and their intensive dialogue on strategic issues, constitute a major guarantee for peace and security in the world today. Israel also welcomes those bilateral and regional developments in different parts of the world which contribute to national security as well as to the regional arms control and stability of those concerned. We are hopeful that the political and security environment in our own region will further improve so as to allow similar achievements.

Israel was recently admitted as a member of the Conference on Disarmament. We waited for some years for membership in this important body - the "single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum" of the family of nations. We appreciate the efforts and the tenacity of many delegations and governments to achieve the recent expansion of the CD. We agree with all those who urge the CD to keep the issue of its membership under constant and renewed scrutiny, in order to better reflect changing international and regional realities and the desire of others to contribute to the work of the CD.

We did our apprenticeship as an observer and, in effect, as an active non-member State in the CD for several years and especially throughout the CTBT negotiations, which was beneficial to us and, if I may say so, was proof of our earnestness. We believe that CD membership carries with it heavy responsibilities and we pledge to do our utmost in discharging our duties as a new member.

On the issue of the programme of work of the CD, Israel is of the view that the CD agenda has to strike an appropriate balance between the desirable and the possible. Since 1990, the CD has successfully negotiated the CWC and the CTBT and for that it deserves our appreciation. In the context of the CD programme of work, it must be remembered that the millions who have perished as a result of wars, armed conflict and civil strife since 1945 bear witness to the sheer and utter destructiveness of weapons classified as "conventional". The problems therefore lie with the reckless use of arms, of all categories, by irresponsible regimes.

As the tensions which reflected the cold war era give way to growing global confidence and cooperation, the international community should now turn more of its attention and energies towards many as yet unresolved regional conflicts, which are characterized by unprecedented conventional arms build-ups and, in some instances, also by the Clandestine pursuit of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Apparently, Iraq and North Korea are the recent examples in this regard, but surely not the only ones - nor the last. Iran is another example of a State which is currently engaged in acquiring non-conventional capabilities, in a manner which is not consistent with its international obligations. Israel calls upon the international community to prevent such dangerous developments which will further destabilize the Middle East and pose a grave threat to many countries.

In view of their heavy responsibilities, CD members should strive, in our view, to set a correspondingly realistic and pragmatic programme of work, the pursuit of which will make our world more, rather than less, secure, stable and peaceful.

The CD cannot assume the tasks of other frameworks - bilateral, multilateral, regional or otherwise. It cannot dictate nor impose either agenda items or contents or timetables. The CD should continue to freely negotiate by consensus. Those treaties to be negotiated and concluded in the CD should be subject to truly universal adherence and should not remain legally binding instruments to which only like-minded States subscribe.

One more principle that should guide our future work in the CD has to do with the verification mechanism of treaties. We should maintain a careful balance between verification regimes that are reliable and effective to assure compliance, and the need to protect vital national security interests or industrial-commercial concerns. Likewise, we should not lose sight of the absolute necessity to complement effective verification with reliable enforcement to ascertain that arms control obligations are not taken lightly, and countries that behave otherwise are punished rather than rewarded.

We hope that members of the CD will be able to bridge their differences and soon embark on constructive and effective work, which has been the hallmark of the CD for some years. By so doing, the CD will rise to the main challenge of the twenty-first century, namely, that of making our globe a much more peaceful and secure place for all mankind.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for his kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland, Ambassador Anderson.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): Mr. President, firstly, may I congratulate you very warmly on your rather unexpected but very welcome arrival in the Chair as President? We wish you well during the period ahead. I would also like to express our great appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská, for her very skilful handling of the presidency during her time in office. As we come to the end of our 1997 session, I would like to offer some brief reflections on topics which have been at the centre of our work for the past year.

We have had many difficult discussions relating to possible negotiations within the CD on anti-personnel landmines. These discussions have taken place in parallel to the unfolding of the Ottawa Process, which has steadily gained momentum and attracted an increasing number of participants. As we know,

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negotiations are currently taking place in Oslo which are expected to lead to the signing in Ottawa in December of an international agreement to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

We are encouraged to note the number of delegations who announced here in recent weeks that they would participate in the Oslo meeting with a view to signing an agreement in Ottawa. At the same time, there is a somewhat disturbing trend in many of the references to the Ottawa Process we hear in the CD. Some delegations have appeared to argue that negotiations in the CD on APLs will be essential because any agreement emerging from the Ottawa Process will not be immediately universal. This argument implies that if an international agreement, negotiated in good faith through an open-ended process, does not achieve instant universality then, in effect, negotiations on the same issue must be reopened in a more exclusive forum in an effort to capture the non-signatories.

It strikes us as odd for this, of all bodies, to suggest that an agreement which fails to attract immediate global support is so intrinsically flawed as to require a relaunching of the negotiation in the immediate aftermath of its opening for signature. We might well ask ourselves what implications such an approach would have for other disarmament negotiations.

We can confidently expect that, by January 1998, there will be an international agreement banning APLs signed by a very large number of countries. It is difficult to envisage how the signatories to such an agreement - among whom there will be, we presume, many represented in this chamber - can then embark on a separate negotiation dealing with exactly the same prohibitions with the final objective of concluding another, inevitably less stringent, regime. If we were ready to accept such a possibility before the ink is dry on the Ottawa agreement then, of course, the Ottawa agreement would never attain universality. Why should any country rush to sign the Ottawa agreement when there might be a possibility of a fresh set of negotiations in Geneva on the same issue?

In our view, there is potential here for an extremely confusing legal situation which could complicate the international effort to ban APLs. A CD agreement on APLs, if it ever came into existence, would exist alongside the Ottawa agreement and the strengthened restrictions introduced by amended Protocol II of the Inhumane Weapons Convention. Rather than having mutually reinforcing texts, we risk contradictory approaches and a weakening of the growing international resolve to end the scourge of landmines.

In summary, while we fully accept that any APL ban must seek to attract the widest possible adherence, especially from major producers and users of landmines, we are distinctly cautious about arguments which appear to downplay, in advance, the status and significance of the agreement that will be signed in Ottawa.

The second issue which has provoked torrents of words over the past year is the question of future negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Over the past week, we have seen how even the references in the CD's annual report to the

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failure of the CD to make any progress can become the subject of contentious negotiations. Differences over how best to reflect a failure are hardly a creditable end to an indifferent year for the CD.

Early in the 1997 session, I indicated our view that the step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament had produced sufficient progress to justify continuing confidence in its utility. The next step in this approach should be the opening of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention in accordance with the Shannon mandate which the CD has adopted by consensus.

At the same time, my delegation supported calls for a mechanism in the CD, an ad hoc committee if you will, which would permit us to examine what further multilateral negotiations the CD might usefully undertake in support of the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. Such an ad hoc committee could examine any proposal presented to it, including the programme of action presented by members of the G.21 in August 1996, the report of the Canberra Commission and whatever other proposals delegations would wish to put forward. The discussions under such a mechanism should not be rhetorical but pragmatic, an effort to map out further possible multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament while taking full account of the progress made in the bilateral or plurilateral negotiations between the nuclear Powers. We see no reason why these discussions should not take place in parallel to negotiations on fissile cut-off.

Over the past year there has been little progress, despite the best efforts of successive CD Presidents, in reconciling the differing approaches to nuclear disarmament. There is some sign of an emerging middle ground in the CD which appears willing to explore the compromises necessary to make progress. There are also, however, indications that the positions of some delegations have become even more entrenched.

Cynics might suggest that the current impasse serves the interest of any delegation which, for whatever reason, does not want to see immediate progress on nuclear disarmament. My delegation has not yet succumbed to such cynicism. However, if we reconvene here in 1998 only to settle comfortably back into our trenches, the cynics will have their day and the credibility of this body will be further called into question.

The current rate of progress towards multilateral disarmament is unacceptably slow. The international community needs now, not in the next millennium, to consider how best to translate the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons into a more concrete reality; to explore and agree how and by what means this goal might be achieved. Such a consideration should be a means to help us to appreciate the problems and difficulties, which might require multilaterally negotiated solutions, associated with the elimination of nuclear weapons. It seems to us that the CD, with its accumulated experience of complex disarmament negotiations on weapons of mass destruction, is the ideal forum in which to carry forward discussions on the technical and legal questions which must be confronted if we are to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We very much hope that, before the next session, all delegations will undertake a profound reassessment of their positions on the crucial issue, the priority issue, of nuclear disarmament negotiations. To facilitate our further deliberations, we see scope for closer cooperation between delegations, no matter what their regional affiliation, who have a flexible rather than a dogmatic approach on this central issue of our time.

Finally, I should like to address briefly the issue of CD expansion. I would be dishonest if I did not express our disappointment at the lack of progress on this matter. We regret the hiatus between January 1997, when the CD agreed to appoint a Coordinator on expansion, and June 1997, when the appointment was finally made. We thank Ambassador Kreid for his work, which had to be conducted within a very limited time-frame.

What has been established so far is not encouraging. While it seems there is agreement in principle in the CD to a further expansion, many delegations have qualified their agreement with a series of caveats and conditions, all of which are meticulously recorded in the Special Coordinator's report. Reading through all of this, it is difficult to avoid an impression of a lack of political will on the part of many members to tackle the expansion issue in a meaningful way.

We are grateful to those delegations who both publicly and privately have encouraged us to maintain our efforts to secure membership. We hope that these and other delegations will press for early progress in 1998 in addressing the issues raised in Ambassador Kreid's report.

While developments so far offer little ground for optimism, we continue to hope that a more positive and fair-minded attitude will prevail and that we may yet see a real seriousness of purpose on the part of this Conference in addressing the enlargement issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and for her kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Tarmidzi.

Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor under your presidency, like previous speakers before me, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that with your extensive experience and under your able guidance, we will be able to achieve significant progress in our work at this particularly difficult juncture. At the same time, I also wish to express our satisfaction and gratitude to your distinguished predecessors, Ambassador Diallo of Senegal, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for their tireless efforts to achieve progress in our deliberations and negotiations during their presidency. I also use this occasion to welcome the new members and distinguished Ambassadors to the Conference on Disarmament.

In taking the floor today, I am fully aware that my delegation has somewhat refrained from making many interventions or statements, especially during the second and this current session of 1997. I can assure you that this is certainly not because we do not want to participate or contribute to the proceedings, but simply because we did not want to complicate your job or that of previous Presidents unnecessarily. More importantly, I can assure you that our silence should be understood to mean that we are flexible. When we say flexible, we mean genuine flexibility in the spirit of cooperation and compromise in view of the different positions of member countries, including Indonesia.

In my previous statement delivered during the first session, we had stated our position on the various issues and we shall maintain this position in our efforts to find solutions in our negotiations in the CD. In this context, I would like to re-emphasize that our flexibility means that we are open to any proposal presented at this forum, and that we are ready to discuss it as long as it can bring valuable progress to push our deliberations or negotiations forward. When we say we are open, this also means that we can accept the decision of the CD to discuss all matters pertaining to the procedural as well as to the substantive items contained in the agenda, either in its entirety or partially, if the members so wish. Again, this is for the sake of the credibility of the CD.

However, if we are of the view that the agenda should be based on the existing Decalogue, it is because we think - and I believe that this view is also shared by most members - the Decalogue is still relevant to the present world situation. If any country wishes to discuss the relevance of the Decalogue, we are ready to do so. Likewise, if we have stated that our top priority is nuclear disarmament, it is because it has logic and relevance and because it has always been the concern of the international community. The logic and reason of our priority in nuclear disarmament lie in the most prominent international agreements which are universally adhered to, namely the 1970 Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 1978 Final Document of the first special session on Disarmament (SSOD-I), which I believe are recognized and adhered to by most of us in the CD. But again, I repeat that we are open to any suggestions by members wishing to discuss nuclear or conventional weapons, or both, or any other issue, as long as there is a balance between these two items.

If members of the CD think that the time is not yet opportune to discuss those matters of concern and wish to discuss some or any single aspect of each issue, then we are willing to listen. In the context of nuclear disarmament, for example, we could start discussing the fissile material cut-off treaty (FACT) or negative security assurances (NSA). We believe that, in the end, the completion of our negotiation on these issues could strengthen our efforts to achieve comprehensive nuclear disarmament, as in the case of the NPT and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). On the other hand, if members wish to discuss any element of conventional disarmament, such as anti-personnel landmines (APLs), my delegation is ready to do so. Even though we are of the view that the CD is the only appropriate forum to address this important and timely issue, we also welcome in principle any other endeavour aimed at

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iminating this indiscriminate weapon, inter alia, the Ottawa Process, since ose tracks could, in our view, also lead to the elimination and total ban of ese inhuman weapons. Indonesia is very much concerned with the humanitarian fects resulting from the indiscriminate use of landmines. However, it is r belief that with regard to APLs, their total ban should apply also to ose using "sophisticated technology" and not just to the traditional ones, r Indonesia cannot support a policy which implies technological scrimination.

When the first session of the CD started in January 1997, a strong eling of optimism prevailed whereby this year's session would bring new hope r all of us in our endeavours to further accelerate negotiations in the eld of disarmament. We entered this session with a common understanding at only with a sense of goodwill and of flexibility could the tangible ccess we achieved last year be repeated, when the long-awaited CTBT was nally concluded. Regretfully, the slow progress, if not the lack of ogress, in our deliberations proves that this seems not to be the case at is session, as is the case of our inability so far to finalize the CD's port to the United Nations General Assembly.

I believe that the word "flexibility" has become very familiar in our rum since it has been quoted and repeated many times during our liberations. We have been listening attentively to tens, or perhaps ndreds of statements and lectures on the need for flexibility in order to lve our problem and achieve significant progress in our deliberations. Many mes we have heard pledges and promises to be flexible, and also cooperative, finding solutions to our divergences of views.

However, it is unfortunate that so far this "sacred" word has only been oating in the air most of the time during this 1997 CD session. What we ve in fact witnessed in the last few months is exactly the opposite. An titude of inflexibility has dominated our deliberations. For the sake of metimes rather narrow national interests, we have somehow wasted our time, ergy and even perhaps our resources. Moreover, because of our inflexibility have missed the opportunity to achieve the concrete results prescribed by r mandate which are also the wish of the international community. We should serve all these points with regret and concern.

If, during this session, lack of flexibility has hampered our work and d us to a deadlock, there is nothing that my delegation can do to help solve is problem. Therefore, if my delegation has a wish, it will be a simple e. We wish that in the coming sessions of 1998 we can again make progress our deliberations, and we hope that the spirit of cooperation, goodwill and exibility will again prevail in this august assembly.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement d for his kind words to me. I now give the floor to the representative of stralia.

Ms. HAND (Australia): I would just like to make a simple comment to the assembly this morning, noting on behalf of Ambassador Campbell, who is presently away leading the Australian delegation to the negotiations in Oslo, that Ambassador Campbell has concluded bilateral discussions with all but a very small number of, so far, unavailable delegations. His consultations, which he continued last week, continue to yield interesting insights substantially supporting those conclusions he offered to colleagues in his statement to the plenary last week. From the Australian point of view, we welcome the suggestion made by Ambassador Akram that the President undertake consultations with regard to the work of all four Special Coordinators in the inter-sessional period. Ambassador Campbell, I know, looks forward to participating in consultations on APLs or any of those other issues in any way that the President would find useful.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me first of all to convey to you the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you conducting our work. You may count on our support and cooperation.

The delegation of Mexico would like to express appreciation for the reports submitted by the Special Coordinators on improved and effective functioning, the expansion of membership, the agenda and the question of anti-personnel landmines. I would like to convey to them the appreciation of my delegation for the efforts they made to discharge and complete the mandates entrusted to them by the Conference on 26 June 1997. The reports on the agenda, improved and effective functioning and on expansion of membership contain very useful analytical elements that will lead the Conference to continue to reflect on each of these important items in the future. I have asked for the floor today to refer briefly to the reports submitted on 14 and 28 August by the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines. As the Conference will remember, the question of anti-personnel mines was the subject of many proposals and lengthy consultations. On 26 June it was decided to appoint a Special Coordinator entrusted with conducting consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines, to take into consideration the proposals and opinions on the matter and to submit an early report to the Conference on Disarmament.

The delegation of Mexico announced on that occasion that it would not oppose consultations being held with a view to determining whether there is consensus in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a legally binding agreement for the total banning of anti-personnel mines. We emphasized that such an appointment would not imply that the Conference had decided to embark on negotiations on anti-personnel mines, much less that an arrangement had been established to negotiate on any aspect of the mines problem. On this understanding, the delegation of Mexico agreed to the appointment of a Special Coordinator on mines.

It is well known that Mexico has participated in the Ottawa Process since its inception with a view to achieving a total ban on anti-personnel landmines before the end of this year. A binding instrument to this end is now being negotiated in Oslo, and the delegation of Mexico is participating actively in those negotiations. Within a few hours I myself will be in Oslo heading our delegation. We are not convinced, as we have stated on many occasions, that the Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for the early conclusion of negotiations for a ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. The reasons are few in number and well known to all, but they are powerful and worth repeating.

Anti-personnel landmines should be completely proscribed. They are indiscriminate weapons whose use is a violation of international humanitarian law. Twenty-five thousand victims a year are more than enough to make the achievement of a legally binding total ban on these weapons a matter of the utmost urgency. Treaties and conventions in the field of international humanitarian law in which a balance is sought between military requirements and the protection due to non-combatants have been and should be negotiated in ad hoc open-ended forums in which decisions are adopted by a majority.

The Conference on Disarmament is not the appropriate forum to negotiate rules of international humanitarian law. It has other objectives and other priorities. In this sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament and arms control we are seeking to balance the legitimate security needs of States with the urgent need to preserve peace and international security. Our priorities are the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and a balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons. It is doubtful whether such a balanced reduction can be achieved by eliminating conventional weapons one by one.

But in addition, the Conference on Disarmament is not conspicuous for rapidity in its negotiations. The banning of anti-personnel mines cannot wait for decades. The time has come. Allow me here to depart for a moment from my written text to say that, of course, I fully subscribe to the argument used in this room this morning by the distinguished Ambassador of Ireland.

Notwithstanding these considerations, the delegation of Mexico agreed that consultations should be held to determine whether there is among the membership of this Conference a common view on how to solve the humanitarian drama of the existence of anti-personnel landmines.

In his report of 14 August, the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines outlined four possible options for a mandate, ranging from simultaneous negotiations on all questions related to a total and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines to a mere review and discussion of the world situation regarding these weapons. In a forum where no votes are taken, where decisions are taken by consensus, the degree of support enjoyed by one option or another is of little importance. Assessments as to where majorities or minorities lie are subjective and are beside the point. That is why consultations were asked for and not a head count. What is important is to identify areas of possible consensus.

We are not surprised that there is a wide spectrum of opinions in the Conference on Disarmament on how to address the problem of mines. We were expecting it. There is no consensus in this Conference to embark on negotiations on a complete ban on anti-personnel mines by means of a legally binding agreement, to be achieved as soon as possible, in response to the United Nations General Assembly's call to all States in resolution 51/45 S. On the basis of the information provided by the Special Coordinator on mines, it seems unlikely that a consensus along these lines can be reached in this forum in the foreseeable future. So much for the argument that negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament would bring in the major producers and exporters. Apparently some of them do not wish to ban anti-personnel mines either in this or in any other forum.

The Special Coordinator has made no recommendation regarding institutional arrangements. He did well to refrain from doing so, for any recommendation on this matter would have gone beyond the terms of his mandate, in which references to institutional arrangements that appeared in the draft decision were purposely omitted.

The question of whether an arrangement to deal with anti-personnel mines should or should not be established, and the most appropriate moment to do so, depends not only on achieving a consensus on a possible mandate but also, and above all, on the decisions the Conference on Disarmament will take regarding the agenda and the programme of work.

In keeping with the decision of 26 June, the Special Coordinator on mines was to present an early report on his consultations. He has presented two. We thank him for them. We are now aware that there is no consensus in the Conference on Disarmament on a possible mandate to negotiate a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines.

The 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament will end in the next few days. While we regret that it was not possible to begin substantive work on any of the items on the agenda, we think that useful thinking on the direction that the Conference on Disarmament should follow did take place this year. The work of the Special Coordinators falls in this context. Their contribution has been stimulating and enlightening. At the beginning of its 1998 session we will have to determine the agenda and the programme of work of the Conference. We will then examine the proposals made by all the delegations with all the respect they deserve.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for his kind words to me. That concludes my list of speakers for today. I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): My delegation would like to make a very brief statement with regard to where the Conference on Disarmament finds itself today, at the end of its 1997 session. We have all heard in this hall over the past several weeks a spate of statements to the effect that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to reach agreement on any negotiations for the current year. The impression has sought to be created that the Conference on Disarmament is an unwieldy and unworkable body which cannot reach agreement on any issue of substance and, therefore, other forums are perhaps more suited for serious work than this, the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

I would like to say for the record today that this assertion is very far from the truth. The truth of the matter is that there are in this hall a number of delegations which have assumed positions on certain issues that are so trenchant and so rigid that they will not allow this forum to proceed with what is its responsibility to undertake negotiations on the items which are placed on its agenda. When we agree to place any item on our agenda, it is with the express understanding that that item is there on the agenda for the purposes of negotiation. Yet when we have turned to the task of creating our negotiation mechanisms, we have been prevented from doing so. And the root of the problems, I must state again for the record, is the refusal of a few States, a handful of States, to allow the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate on what is the highest priority for the international community, that is, nuclear disarmament. It is said that the Conference on Disarmament is an inappropriate forum for nuclear disarmament, that nuclear disarmament is an inappropriate subject for this Conference. But let us turn to our agreements. Let us turn to where we have achieved consensus. Wherever we have achieved consensus, we have all agreed that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority for the international community and that this is the single multilateral negotiating body. If you add two and two, it adds up to four, which means that this is the place where we should be negotiating on nuclear disarmament.

But some States claim that this higher responsibility is only for two or three or five States to negotiate, and the rest of us should deal with small, peripheral matters. Sometimes landmines, sometimes fissile material, sometimes some other issue that can be found on the rack that is not being dealt with elsewhere. It can be consigned to the rabble which constitutes the Conference on Disarmament. This is unacceptable to my delegation, and I believe that this is unacceptable to the majority, the "silent" majority, if I may say, of the membership of this Conference.

We are now faced with a situation where this refusal to acknowledge the work that has been done in this Conference this year on nuclear disarmament is likely, or at least threatens, to prevent this Conference from adopting even a factual report. It is shocking for my delegation to find some delegations resisting a factual reference in our report to the fact that a proposal was made by the Group of 21 to create an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, that a proposal was made by a group of 26 countries suggesting a concrete mandate for negotiations on nuclear disarmament. This was achieved by the group concerned after considerable work, considerable negotiations, and even if we did not work in the Conference as a whole, countries engaged in this hall did undertake very substantive negotiations in order to come forward with those agreed proposals and positions. And they were serious positions, serious proposals that could have opened the door for the Conference on Disarmament to make progress, not only on nuclear disarmament, but also on fissile materials and other issues that were proposed for consideration by the Conference on Disarmament this year. But all this was frustrated because of the trenchant positions of a handful of States.

We hope that this Conference will not end up this year with no report, because that is also a possibility in view of the positions that I have described. I hope that at this crucial moment that majority of delegations who are committed to the multilateral disarmament negotiating process will rally behind a position that is fair and just and not succumb to the kind of process that has frozen this Conference into inactivity in 1997.

Mr. HAN (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation had not planned to take the floor this morning, but it has been forced to do so by certain circumstances. This morning the delegate of Israel mentioned my country and some others in his statement, groundlessly abusing my country, so I would like to speak briefly about this matter. My delegation categorically rejects the accusation put forward by the Israeli delegation and expresses great surprise at why the Israeli delegation spoke in that manner. It is a grave concern and worry of the international community that Israel is still occupying the territories of Arab countries and causing much suffering and sacrifice. It is not only certain countries or regions that are concerned. It is the concern of the whole world. They are not telling the truth. They are raising such questions here this morning because they want to hide these facts and divert world attention from Israel's hostile policies. This is intolerable in the Conference on Disarmament, where it is common practice not to mention countries for one's own purposes. They are violating those practices in this Conference. I wonder what their purpose is in mentioning such things in this meeting. It is only to divert world attention from Israel. I appeal to this forum not to allow such behaviour in the future.

Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should congratulate you, Mr. President, upon the assumption of the presidency of this august body. I am very sorry that when I take the floor here for the first time, it is to ask for the right of reply. But that is beyond our control, so I shall be brief in addressing the allegations made here today by a delegate.

I should state the following in exercising the right of reply. We regret the allegations made by the delegate of Israel with regard to the peaceful nuclear activities of our country. It reveals why there were many reservations on the admission of Israel, a regime of oppression and occupation, to this august body. It is ironic to hear these allegations from a country whose stubborn pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and policies and programmes are a matter of concern not only to countries of the Middle East but also to the whole world. It is ironic to hear these allegations from a country which has not ratified the NPT and has not accepted the IAEA safeguards. As for us, we have ratified the NPT and have opened all our facilities to IAEA inspection. To sum up, I would like to remind the delegate of Israel that "people who live in glass houses should not throw stones". It is better for Israel to address the legitimate concerns of the international community over its determination to acquire weapons of mass destruction and to stop its deception and accusations.

Mr. AL-TIKRITI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): In fact, like some of our colleagues, I did not intend to speak in this connection. However, the statements made by some of our colleagues and the declaration by the representative of Israel have prompted me to ask for the floor.

First of all, I personally do not want this forum to be the scene of diatribes between delegations or accusations made by one party against another. The responsibility of this Conference, as everyone is aware, is clear and well known and the functions assigned to the Conference are also clear and well known. I therefore propose that in this forum we should focus on the basic functions assigned to us and that the details, modalities and objectives of other issues should be left to other United Nations bodies and organizations and international forums since these issues fall within the scope of their responsibilities. If we wish to speak of weapons and how they are acquired, etc., this is a matter which, in my opinion, would require lengthy discussion over a period of weeks or even months. Therefore we should avoid a dialogue of the deaf or one which could become a philosophical debate to determine the sex of the angels.

The question of strategic weapons in the Middle East stems from a situation in which some countries of the Middle East, and I am speaking here of some of the Arab States, have acquired strategic weapons not on their own initiative but as a reaction to the fact that Israel had acquired strategic weapons in their most dangerous form, namely nuclear weapons. Of course, this is known to the international community and it is something on which we do not need to debate. Israel is continuing to occupy Arab land. This is a well-known fact. Therefore, Mr. President, if you will allow me, I would like to reiterate my proposal that, in this forum, we should focus on our basic duties and avoid diatribes and mutual accusations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement. That concludes my list of speakers for today. I recognize the representative of Finland. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, let me start by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. The 1997 session of the CD has been a period of reflection after the successful conclusion of negotiations on the CTBT. During this year's session, we have been witness to intensive discussions on various topics which the CD might address next. It is evident that countries have different priorities depending on their national security concerns. However, in order to find common ground for future CD work, we need to determine which issues have realistic possibilities for obtaining concrete results within a reasonable time-frame. In our view, the CD cannot afford another year of reflection. The CD is a negotiating forum. It is important for the CD to be able to start real negotiations from the very beginning of the 1998 session. To make this possible, intensive consultations are needed during the inter-sessional period.

Finland was very pleased that the Conference agreed in June on the appointment of four Special Coordinators, on anti-personnel landmines, the

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

agenda, improved and effective functioning and CD expansion. This was an important step forward in practical work and, within the very short time available, all the four Coordinators were able to conduct extensive consultations and submit reports. All the Coordinators indicated, however, that there had not been enough time to come up with specific recommendations. For the credibility of the work of the Conference, it is necessary that the mandates of those Special Coordinators who need more time to conclude their work be extended. The Conference should give them the possibility of conducting inter-sessional consultations if they so wish. We would also like to emphasize the role of the President of the Conference in conducting appropriate consultations in the inter-sessional period to enable the Conference to decide upon its work effectively at the beginning of next year. We would also like to see a clear reference to this in the CD's annual report.

Finland continues to believe that the CD has an important role to play in the strengthening of global security and stability. It is the task of the Conference to review its functioning, membership and agenda in order to be able to respond to the expectations of the international community. The ideas reflected in the Special Coordinators' reports form a very good basis for further elaboration of those issues.

Finland was one of the three countries which in March 1997 made a proposal on the appointment of a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We commend Ambassador Campbell for his diligent work as Special Coordinator on this issue and strongly support his request to continue his work during the inter-sessional period. We are well aware of the concerns of the international community for eliminating APLs, thereby reducing the number of innocent people who fall victim every year to the indiscriminate use of these weapons. We recognize the humanitarian impulse created by the Ottawa Process and the meeting that is currently taking place in Oslo. The Ottawa Process has greatly strengthened momentum towards a total ban on APLs.

We have stated repeatedly that Finland wants a global, verifiable and legally binding ban on APLs. In order to negotiate a global treaty, due consideration must be given to the national security concerns of the States involved. The CD is the forum where the security aspects of the ban on APLs can be properly addressed. The CD should agree without delay to the establishment of an ad hoc committee with a mandate to deal with anti-personnel landmines. This is an urgent issue that should not be linked to other issues.

And as to some statements just made during this plenary, I would only repeat that we respect the work of the Coordinators, including the very valuable work of Ambassador Campbell, and we should also respect the wish they have expressed in their reports to have more time to complete their tasks if they need it. As we understand the situation today, we have not yet reached a consensus on what basis we will finally be able to start real work on APLs.

To conclude, in this connection, I would like to state that another issue that we consider of great importance is the fissile material cut-off treaty. Negotiations on this should be started on the agreed mandate without further delay. We see the FMCT as an important step in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. BOUCHAARA (Morocco) (translated from French): Just to ascertain your intentions, Mr. President. Do you intend to call informal consultations after this plenary meeting, so that we can tell the Finnish delegation informally what we think of its proposal?

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Very briefly, Mr. President, I would like to indicate that the spirit of the statement made by the Finnish delegation is in line with the views of my own delegation, and in the spirit that prompted the statement by Morocco I would like to indicate that I do not intend to respond in plenary to the statement by the Ambassador of Pakistan.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for your statement. The distinguished representative of Morocco inquired how we are going to proceed. If you will recall, when we met for informal consultations yesterday, we agreed that there would be an informal plenary immediately after this plenary with a view to discussing the draft report to the United Nations General Assembly. I would like to repeat once again that we will be discussing the report to the United Nations General Assembly. If there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor, then I would like to adjourn this meeting and thereafter convene the informal plenary immediately. But before doing so I would like to stress once again, today being Thursday, if the delegations are interested in having the draft report in the official languages, we should have finished the consideration of our draft report this morning. That not being the case, we can continue our consideration of the report but I cannot guarantee that there will be translations of the report - if we are going to have a report in the end.

If there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor, I would like to adjourn this plenary and immediately thereafter convene the informal plenary. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Tuesday, 9 September, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.778
9 September 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 9 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 778th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like to inform you that, once we have exhausted the list of speakers for this morning, I intend to suspend this plenary meeting and convene immediately thereafter an informal plenary meeting to consider the draft annual report to the United Nations General Assembly, as contained in document CD/WP.489/Rev.1, and to resume the plenary for the formal adoption of the draft report.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of India and Cyprus. However, before giving the floor to Ambassador Ghose, I should like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to take the opportunity offered by this last plenary meeting of the Conference during its current session to bid farewell to her since she will not be with us when we start our 1998 session. Ambassador Ghose represented her Government for two years only at this Conference, but two important years for which she will be remembered by all the members of the CD. The clarity, talent and courage with which she articulated the positions of her Government during the difficult negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the perseverance with which she set out the priorities of her Government in the field of disarmament were recognized by all as evidence of her great diplomatic skill. I am sure that we will all miss her presence, her personal qualities and her warmth, and that I speak on behalf of all of us when I wish her all the best for the future.

I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Ghose.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and may I quote you and say thank you for the kind words addressed to me, but I am a little taken aback, and I would like to sincerely thank you for all the extremely nice things you have just said.

I take the floor today, at this last plenary meeting of this year's session, to bid farewell to the CD and to all my colleagues in the CD, those who are present here today and those who are not, the Ambassadors and the members of their delegations with whom I have had the privilege of working.

Permit me, and I know that this is expected, to take this not-to-be-missed opportunity to share with you and members of the CD, my colleagues, some personal views and reflections on the not unexciting times I have lived through in this forum. While I had, when I came to Geneva, been acquainted with the United Nations for several years, disarmament was not an area I had ever directly dealt with. So when I came, many weeks and months were spent in trying to unravel the intricacies, recognize the trick mirrors and generally to get a sense of not just the issues, but the ambience of disarmament negotiations. There were, and are today, others whose experience I could never hope to match, but from whom I was able to learn much: the relative importances of procedure, process and substance, for instance, how to divert the eyes of one's interlocutor from the stars to something which the interlocutor did not mean to address at all, what chutzpah meant, and so much more. I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of them, past and present, to all my respected adversaries, and all the friends I made in this forum.

I feel I should also apologize to those who may have been taken aback by the emphasis with which I apparently frequently presented my country's positions. One could put it down to force of conviction or force of habit. My apologies also to the non-smoking members of the CD, particularly those who have had to sit on either side of the Indian seat in the plenaries when there is no choice. I can only say it is the alphabet which is to blame.

To you, Mr. President, who have worked so patiently and with determination over the last few weeks, and all our past Presidents, to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Kader Bensmail, and all the secretariat here in Geneva, my thanks for all the help and, often, advice that I have received throughout this period.

I would also like to welcome to the CD all our new colleagues, and while expressing my regret that I will not have the privilege of working with them, would like to give them my view of what we did in the CD this year. Many apprehensions have been voiced of late about the future of this forum; there has been much doom and gloom about the CD's apparent imminent collapse. I do not agree with this assessment. The CD is not an organization with programmes and projects. It is a forum ready to be used when there is need for it and when we, the members, wish to do so. It was set up by us to negotiate multilateral treaties, which, while responding to the needs of international security, safeguarded vital national security interests as well. Agreements to negotiate such treaties is reached, I believe, when views coincide on the bases and the objectives of a treaty. A treaty or a negotiation on a treaty that is forced on States by "persuasion" (I use that word in quotation marks) of reluctant States - sometimes called recalcitrant States, as I have been called - to accept what they are not committed to for whatever reason - their security perceptions, their perception of priorities, whatever - such agreements are tenuous at best and certainly not sustainable in the long run, especially, to quote Ambassador de Icaza, who I am so sorry is not here today, if the objective is to disarm the unarmed.

Let me refer very briefly to two treaties recently negotiated here in the CD and with which I have had some acquaintance, one a little more than the other: the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We spent more than a dozen years negotiating the CWC. We got a consensus of sorts. I am aware that there were many reservations on procedure and substance, but the Convention was opened for signature and States voluntarily signed and then ratified it. I had the privilege of being here when my country deposited its instrument of ratification for the CWC, enabling it to come into force this year. The CD had done the best that it could. With the CTBT, however, the situation, in my view, was vastly different and perhaps we may be seeing the after-effects of that today. There was no consensus in the CD on a text we had negotiated for only about three years. So, did we continue to try to achieve consensus to meet the needs, not only of my country but of several others? No, we did not. What we did was that one country adopted a non-consensual text as its national text so that it could get a CD number, and then this was presented by yet another delegation as a national paper with a CD number for adoption by the General Assembly. I believe, and this is just an aside, that for my country it was perhaps the first time we actually voted against a multilateral disarmament treaty, and not just stood aside and allowed a treaty to be adopted by those who wished to do so. Now, what could the impact of this particular development be on us here? We are seeing a part of it. What assurance have any of us here today that this cannot happen again and again? In a sense it appears to be happening again, not in this forum, but we shall have to see at the forthcoming General Assembly. Disarmament issues which involve security interests of all or many or even one country cannot be decided upon by a group of countries, however large, by the adoption of a resolution in the General Assembly. We know that only too well, as is frequently pointed out to us in a specific context. So what treaties can we then address ourselves to? And where can we negotiate these treaties that would safeguard our interests? We have heard talk of the need for flexibility. Flexibility on approaches and language are the substance or process of negotiation. Flexibility on national security interests is perhaps asking for too much.

Therefore, I believe that what we did in the CD this year was necessary and may continue to be necessary for a longer period. It was, in my view, inevitable. It is necessary that this loss of confidence be worked out of our systems. This year, 61 countries have tried to identify issues on which their views of their security concerns coincide. Our priorities, at the moment at least, clearly differ. For example, those with nuclear weapons and those protected by those weapons have one set of priorities - I respect that. Those who have neither weapons nor umbrellas have different priorities, different perceptions of national security. In my view, this is not deadlock or failure of the CD. We just do not agree on the bases or objectives of the negotiations on specific issues. There are others perhaps on which we may find agreement and, if we do, the CD is there ready for our use.

There are, however, two other general issues which have intrigued me during the entire time I have spent in the CD and I cannot but put this before my colleagues here today. The first concerns the "logic" often promoted in this forum. An annual report on the activities of the CD this year must reflect the preferences for the programme of work next year, in the full knowledge that the annual reports of one year have rarely affected the following year's work. The logic of that completely misses me. A stand-alone FMCT, it is said, is closely linked with the CTBT and has been mandated by the NPT review process. Having had the personal pleasure of pressing a red button on the CTBT last year and not being part of the NPT review process, I have never understood the logic which leads any country to think that we can somehow, perhaps with some clever drafting, be bound to negotiate a stand-alone FMCT. Finally, and still on the intriguing logic in the CD, we all accept that not all States are equal in power, whether through the possession or non-possession or protection or non-protection of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, whatever. There are some, indeed, who are more equal than others. I accept that. What is, however, difficult to comprehend is the logic of an approach that assumes that the security interests of the powerful are more important than the security interests of the less powerful, not only to the international community but to the less powerful themselves.

And having spoken of the international community, this brings me to the second intriguing issue: what exactly is this "international community"? Who is this man, and on which street is he standing, who has such expectations of us? The man in a street in New Delhi has very different expectations from the man in a street in another country, in another continent. And yet I have had the expectations of the man in the street put to me as a reason why I should agree to something which affects my interests. Public opinion in one country or a group of countries does not, in my view, constitute "international public opinion". On the other hand, when international independent experts associated closely with the disarmament processes and negotiations pronounce themselves again, for example, on the elimination of nuclear weapons, as most recently by the Pugwash Society, we in the CD do not even bother to respond. We even had the Foreign Minister of Australia presenting formally the Canberra Commission report earlier this year. We not only did not address it, we have ignored it in our report. I do not intend to suggest that it be included, but this is just a comment and a farewell speech and an observation.

It is clear that I am leaving the CD with more questions in my mind about international disarmament negotiations than when I came. Fortunately, this confusion is mine alone and is not likely to affect my country's participation, as I leave government service permanently at the end of November. I will remember my days and friends, particularly my friends in the CD, with fond, if bemused, nostalgia in my new life.

In conclusion, in one of your statements last week you had seen the possibility of some areas of agreement emerging by next year, no one country's or one group's agenda but from the CD's own agenda. In bidding farewell to you, I would like to sincerely wish that all of you in the CD, in 1998, indeed fare well.

Mr. ZACKHEOS (Cyprus): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the presidency and on the skilful way you guided our deliberations at an extremely delicate moment of our work. Our congratulations also go to your predecessor, the distinguished Ambassador of Slovakia, and our thanks to the members of the secretariat.

I take the floor this morning upon instruction in order to brief you on my Government's position regarding the Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Nuclear Material.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus welcomes this Programme, which was agreed by the P-8 Governments at the Nuclear Safety and Security Summit held in Moscow in April 1996.

In response to the call contained in the communiques of the Moscow and Lyon Summits, the Government of Cyprus has announced its intention to join the P-8 States and Ukraine in implementing the Programme and to cooperate with them, as well as with other present and future adherents, in all aspects of prevention, detection, exchange of information, investigation and prosecution in cases of illicit nuclear trafficking.

We are currently engaged in dialogue with the P-8 countries seeking technical assistance in fields like training of personnel, detection equipment for nuclear material, etc., which will allow us to meet our obligations under the Programme.

Cyprus believes that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a threat to international peace, security and stability, and my Government has manifested, on various occasions, its commitment to non-proliferation. The destructiveness of nuclear weapons is immense and their use would be catastrophic.

Cyprus has undertaken international commitments seeking to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is a party to almost all instruments and organizations of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In this respect, I would like to note my Government's following recent decisions: to join as from April 1997 IAEA's programme for collecting and sharing information on trafficking incidents known as the Database on Illicit Trafficking, and to accede to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight my Government's commitment to general and complete disarmament by reiterating President Clerides' proposal for the demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus, which we consider as our contribution to the efforts for conventional weapons disarmament. This proposal represents a genuine answer to the security concerns of all Cypriots. Moreover, its implementation will lead to stability in the sensitive region of Eastern Mediterranean.

In conclusion, I would like to bid farewell to our Indian colleague and tell her that we will miss her a lot.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Cyprus for his statement and for his kind words to me. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? If this is not the case, I shall now suspend this plenary meeting and convene an informal plenary meeting devoted to the consideration of the draft annual report.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: I declare the 778th plenary meeting resumed. I should now like to formalize the provisional agreements reached at the informal plenary meeting on the draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.489/Rev.1, as amended. May I take it that section I, entitled "Introduction", can be adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: May I take it that section II, entitled "Organization of work of the Conference", covering pages 3-8, can be adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: May I take it that section III, entitled "Substantive work of the Conference during its 1997 session", covering pages 9-22, can be adopted, as amended, with the understanding that the document to be presented by the delegation of Mexico will be listed in the report? I would like to give the floor to the delegation of Mexico.

Mr. JOUBLANC (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, the delegation of Mexico wishes to state that in the opinion of the Mexican Government, the consultations by the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines constitute a procedural matter and do not form part of the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico. May I take it that section III, entitled "Substantive work of the Conference during its 1997 session", covering pages 9-22, can be adopted as amended? The distinguished representative of France is asking for the floor.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): A point of clarification: I understand that the formula you used - "as amended" - means that the statement just read by the delegate of Mexico will be given a CD number and will appear on page 18 in the appropriate place in paragraph 48. That is the statement we are talking about.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much for your statement. That is the understanding, and the document will appear as new document "r" on page 18. The distinguished representative of Syria has the floor.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic): I did not intend to take the floor, but our understanding of the words "as amended" is the inclusion of the CD document that was presented by Mexico and the correction on page 12, paragraph 30, that was mentioned by the distinguished Ambassador of China, which would be "the objective of the complete elimination" - the inclusion of the word "elimination".

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Yes, there were two amendments, one by China and the other by the delegation of Turkey. Those amendments will also be incorporated. I think the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation is asking for the floor.

Mr. BERDENNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): As I understand it, we intend to include in paragraph 48 a reference to the document which the delegation of Mexico intends to submit to us, rather than the entire document. If my understanding is correct, please confirm this Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: What we have on page 18 is a listing of documents, so that new document "r" will be listed as CD/1475, including the date, on page 18, with the appropriate title. That is the arrangement.

May I take it that section III of the draft report is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: May I now take it that the draft annual report in its entirety, as contained in document CD/WP.489/Rev.1, as amended, is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: In connection with paragraph 54 of the report that was just adopted, I should like to reassure all delegations that the consultations to be held during the inter-sessional period by the current and incoming Presidents will of course be in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? The distinguished representative of the United States has the floor.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for your tireless efforts to bring this body to consensus on our annual report to the United Nations General Assembly and for your willingness to undertake this challenging task, when the musical chairs brought Sri Lanka to the Chair two months ahead of schedule. We express our gratitude for your willingness to do that. On a personal note, I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome those colleagues who have joined us in recent weeks and offer them encouragement and indeed courage for the days ahead. I would also like to bid a fond farewell to those of our colleagues taking their leave, those of whose departure we are already aware, such as that of the distinguished representative of India and you, Mr. President, and those who may hope to slip quietly into the night.

I have asked for the floor today to offer a few reflections and comments on the CD year we are now bringing to a close. Unlike last year, it is not a year for which any of us should be proud. And, while not surprising, it is nonetheless disappointing that the differences between participants over priorities in 1997 prevented the CD from engaging collectively in any substantive work on any of the issues related to its agenda.

It is clear that the divisions within the CD reflect genuine foreign policy differences and priorities among the member States. These divisions and the CD's concomitant lack of progress this year, however, should not constitute a reflection on the Conference on Disarmament itself as an institution. As we have all witnessed or are aware of, the Conference is as productive as it is allowed to be - no more, no less.

Policy differences notwithstanding, there also seemed to be, at times, a fundamental lack of desire and will to achieve any substantive results. It is the hope of my Government that next year things will be different and that the CD will resume work and find one or more issues on which to begin substantive negotiations. For the United States, the obvious and feasible choices for negotiations are a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, in the nuclear arena, and steps towards a global ban on anti-personnel landmines in the conventional arena.

With or without the CD, the United States is moving forward on arms control issues and is hard at work in the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament. The recent agreement reached between the United States and the Russian Federation after several years of hard work on theatre missile defence issues is just the latest example of tangible progress. We continue to believe that the most expeditious way to ensure continued progress in nuclear disarmament, at least for the foreseeable future, is for the United States and the Russian Federation to continue bilateral negotiations. While there is a multilateral role on specific nuclear disarmament issues such as CTBT and FMCT, multilateral efforts to programme nuclear disarmament writ large would only serve to hinder the real progress already well under way.

In the heat of the moment unfortunate remarks are sometimes made that will remain for ever a part of our written record. These remarks will undoubtedly cause scholars and historians in future years to wonder where the CD priorities were in 1997. We heard one such unfortunate remark at last week's plenary when it was asserted that the five declared nuclear Powers want the CD to discuss only "small items" such as anti-personnel landmines and a fissile material cut-off treaty. The root of the CD's problems, we were told, was our trenchant refusal to acknowledge the "world will" to negotiate nuclear disarmament in the CD.

My delegation would not describe a ban on anti-personnel landmines as a "small item". As participants were also reminded in plenary last week by another speaker, 25,000 innocent men, women and children are killed or maimed each year by landmines. But we are told that APLs are a "small item" and that nuclear weapons have the potential - the potential - to kill. Is it the "world will" that we deal with our potential problems first and leave our immediate problems until later? Who could deny that nuclear weapons have the potential to kill? But who could also deny that the potential is less now than it was one year ago, and significantly less than it was in 1990? The declared nuclear Powers which bear the responsibility for nuclear weapons are working to reduce their destructive potential, and the record of the last 10 years clearly reflects indisputable and significant progress.

I believe that the dark curtains which shade this room also obscure our vision of what the "world will" truly is. The grim and terribly evocative memorial now standing in the Place des Nations, just outside our front gate, is not a metaphor for nuclear destruction. It is called the "Broken chair", and the shattered stump of one of its legs does not depict a potential problem, but a real and horrible tragedy. APLs may be considered a "small item" to some, but that massive memorial to splintered limbs and shattered lives in the Place des Nations is not a small item, and the floral bouquets so lovingly placed there at its base are not small expressions of the "world will" for the CD to take action, now, to end the nightmare of anti-personnel landmines. It is time for the CD to do its part in contributing to efforts already under way to eliminate this scourge. It is time for the CD also to respond to this call for action.

The fissile material cut-off treaty was also referred to as a "small item". Although those who call for nuclear disarmament negotiations in the CD accept that FMCT is an integral component of nuclear disarmament, they refuse to negotiate a separate treaty to halt the production of fissile material which gives nuclear weapons their potential to kill. If delegations honestly want the CD to work on nuclear disarmament, they should jump at the chance to negotiate a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material. This treaty would be a vital step, a multilateral step, in the path toward nuclear disarmament.

It is not surprising that the frustrations built up over a year of inactivity have resulted in a series of statements attempting, to use an American colloquialism, to remove the monkey from one's back and to shift the blame for the 1997 CD failure to others. At the end of the day, of course, we must all accept responsibility for the fact that 1997 is the first and only year in which we were unable to convene an ad hoc committee or undertake any collective substantive work.

What happened to us? In our view, the answer is quite simple. In any negotiating situation - be it labour relations, a real estate transaction, diplomacy, or even a marriage, so I am told - the parties must be committed to a continuing relationship and a reasonably acceptable outcome. This is the so-called "win-win" situation in which the parties achieve some, if not all, of their objectives. The parties must work to narrow their differences, to settle the issues that can be resolved, and to set aside the issues on which there can be no agreement. The ideal outcome is for the negotiators to leave the bargaining table reasonably satisfied that all have won something and that no one has lost or capitulated. The alternative is divorce, resulting from irreconcilable differences or, in CD parlance, linkage and a time-bound framework, a sure recipe for torpedoing any progress on substantive issues. By this "all or nothing approach" practised in the CD this year, concrete progress on specific and timely issues, issues ripe for multilateral negotiation, was held hostage to demands for an agreement to negotiate multilaterally nuclear disarmament in a time-bound framework.

I think that the negotiations of the past two days have shown that we are all capable of being flexible and of compromise. My delegation has certainly tried to show flexibility and a willingness, in principle, as well as throughout the year, to discuss topics that we do not particularly wish to discuss. Our flexibility was based on an individual appraisal of each topic. If we are to negotiate in 1998, the Conference on Disarmament will have to determine what it is realistically capable of negotiating, and not what individual members see as their only priority. Without flexibility and a significant change in attitude, our prospects for 1998 are no better than the year we have just concluded.

On 21 August, when you opened the 775th CD plenary, you expressed optimism that the 1998 Conference on Disarmament will get back to work. This is a view my delegation shares.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States for her statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point in time? I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I have not asked for the floor to respond to the distinguished representative of the United States, although I must say that there is much that could be said for the other point of view, the point of view of the developing countries and the members of the Group of 21. But I shall leave the record to speak for itself. I have asked for the floor merely to announce that the Group of 21 will meet tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Distinguished delegates, after several weeks of intensive negotiations and consultations, we have been able to adopt the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the forthcoming General Assembly of the United Nations. I cannot say that these negotiations have been easy. Indeed, the negotiations reflected the difficult time the CD experienced during the entirety of its 1997 session. Having said that, I must quickly commend the goodwill, accommodation and, most importantly, the flexibility displayed by all delegations, recognizing the important role of the CD as the single multilateral negotiating mechanism on disarmament matters.

As I stated on 21 August, we should not consider the 1997 session of the Conference as a wasted year. After concluding negotiations on the CTBT, this institution could not have immediately moved on to negotiating another string of international instruments. Even the CD has to pause for a while, take stock of its situation and decide what it should do next. We can therefore consider 1997 as a year of reflection. Having completed this session, the Conference is now aware of its priorities and limitations. With that knowledge, I am certain that the Conference will be ready to face 1998 with renewed confidence.

In my capacity as President for the remaining period of 1997, I will, together with the incoming President, undertake consultations in keeping with paragraph 54 of the report, and also, of course, in keeping with the rules of procedure of the Conference. With the goodwill that was evident during our consultations, I am confident that together we will be able to pave the way for a productive year in 1998.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Conference, I wish to thank most sincerely Mr. Bensmail, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, and the able members of the secretariat, without whose competent conference-servicing we would not have been able to conclude our work today. I would also wish to thank the interpreters who were called upon to work beyond their normal working hours to enable the Conference to conclude its work. Finally, I would like to thank all delegations for the understanding and cooperation they extended to me, which enabled us to conclude our work in 1997.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 20 January 1998, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

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